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OFF THE FRONT

CREAM OF THE CROP

The “Fab Five” power over the climb of the Col d’Allos on stage 17 before hitting the finishing ascent to Pra Loup. Vincenzo Nibali (Astana), Chris Froome (Team Sky), Nairo Quintana (Movistar), Alejandro Valverde (Movistar), and Alberto Contador (Tinkoff-Saxo) showed they were head and shoulders above the rest this day when the road tilted up. Crashing on the descent, Contador would see his already precarious chances of winning the coveted Giro-Tour double disappear along with the fabric of his bib shorts. Quintana forced the pace near the finish, distancing everyone except the one man he needed to, the maillot jaune.

PHOTO BY BRAKETHROUGH MEDIA

PODIUM PLACES AT GRAND TOURS FOR THE “FAB FIVE”

ALBERTO CONTADOR (Tinkoff-Saxo)

Tour de France: 1st (2007, 2009)

Giro d’Italia: 1st (2008, 2015)

Vuelta a España: 1st (2008, 2012, 2014)

VINCENZO NIBALI (Astana)

Tour de France: 1st (2014); 3rd (2012)

Giro d’Italia: 1st (2013); 2nd (2011); 3rd (2010)

Vuelta a España: 1st (2010); 2nd (2013)

CHRIS FROOME (Sky)

Tour de France: 1st (2013, 2015); 2nd (2012)

Giro d’Italia: n/a

Vuelta a España: 2nd (2011, 2014)

NAIRO QUINTANA (Movistar)

Tour de France: 2nd (2013, 2015)

Giro d’Italia: 1st (2014)

Vuelta a España: n/a

ALEJANDRO VALVERDE (Movistar)

Tour de France: 3rd (2015)

Giro d’Italia: n/a

Vuelta a España: 1st (2009); 2nd (2006, 2012); 3rd (2003, 2013, 2014)

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The middle way



IT'S OKAY TO LOVE CYCLING.

On the day that I'm writing this, the *New York Times* has just published a story about cyclists testing positive for an experimental blood booster that hasn't even been approved for human consumption, and the UCI has announced the 30-day suspension of the entire Androni Giocattoli-Sidermec team. It's the first such ban under the UCI's new rule calling for suspensions of any teams that have two anti-doping violations within a 12-month period.

Not only is doping still a problem, the cheats are raiding research labs for new drugs.

But this is an issue for all sports. And it's okay to love cycling.

It's possible to be aware of cycling's beauty and its problems simultaneously. To see only the former is to be willfully ignorant; to focus solely on the latter is to be locked in a dysfunctional relationship. Stick with a partner when all you can see are flaws, and you're in for a long and unhappy life.

We're cycling lifers. So we're going to continue doing our part to uncover cheats and liars without letting that get in the way of the passion and athletic exploits that drew us to this sport in the first place. That's why we can discuss Androni's ban and the feel-good story of Eritrean Tour debutant Daniel Teklehaimanot in the same breath; the fact that the former is true doesn't mean the latter is not.

In this issue, we look back at Chris Froome's Tour de France and his ascent to the top of the cycling heap, and we look forward to September's world championships week in Richmond, Virginia. The peloton has a new boss, and worlds are in the U.S. That's good stuff.

We also look ahead to the Vuelta, which, for a variety of reasons, is becoming an increasingly exciting stop on the calendar. It's no longer accurate to think about that race as the least important grand tour; that would be to focus only on its flaws. It is, in fact, a grand tour like none other—a chance for riders who have missed other season goals to make amends (see: Tejay van Garderen) and a race where up-and-comers signal that they're ready to take things to the next level (see: Chris Froome, circa 2011). If you think the Vuelta is boring, you haven't been paying attention.

And if you feel conflicted for being a fan of professional cycling, I'd like to tell you that it's okay. This is still a beautiful sport.

— JOHN BRADLEY

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Pro Teams like Tinkoff-Saxo, Astana Pro Team, MTN Qhubeka or triathletes like Frederik Van Lierde and Tim Don, are just a few of those who are actively involved in the development and testing of the CeramicSpeed products, at the same time saving watts and crossing the finish line first. The continuous focus is to optimise the biking experience of every cycling enthusiast, professional rider or triathlete. Managing Director of CeramicSpeed Sport, Martin Banke, gives you the reason why CeramicSpeed bearings and the newly added optimised chains make a real difference on your performance.



1. Martin, as a former athlete and cycling enthusiast yourself, why would you recommend a rider to choose CeramicSpeed for his bike?

Cycling is a sport where one is driven by the passion for riding, for winning or for achieving top performance. And whatever your purpose is, CeramicSpeed surely has a solution to help you. As an elite athlete with a degree in engineering, I knew from the moment I tried the CeramicSpeed bearings that they are the real deal. The pro quality products CeramicSpeed manufactures are the power saving advantage of any athlete or cycling enthusiast who likes dragless spin when riding, regardless of the weather conditions.

The huge advantage of a CeramicSpeed upgrade is the unique mix of extreme lifetime and low friction. As an enthusiast, every ride with CeramicSpeed is smoother, and as an athlete, you save up to 9 watts with bearing products only. On top of everything, the maintenance interventions and product replacements are reduced considerably. We want you to enjoy your bike ride, so we made the most durable products for you. In the end, it comes down to what you want out of your bike experience.

2. Recently, CeramicSpeed acquired American based UFO chains for racing. How does that fit with the company's core products, the CeramicSpeed bearings?

The acquisition came very naturally. Our company's philosophy has been from the very beginning, to deliver low friction solutions that improve the biking performance. The new CeramicSpeed UFO chains are the perfect addition when it comes to the development of our philosophy. Thanks to a special treatment formula, these racing chains complete our CeramicSpeed upgrade with a competitive increase in energy savings between 2-5 watts. Tested by Friction Facts, they proved to be the world's fastest, commercially available power chains.

3. Talking about numbers, how many watts can you save by upgrading to CeramicSpeed bearing products?

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4. Is there a difference between the CeramicSpeed products for athletes and enthusiasts?

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5. At the end of the day what does CeramicSpeed aim to provide a rider?

Our mission is to provide every rider with products that have the minimum friction possible and helps them achieve their max with no energy compromise. CeramicSpeed can provide you with a solution optimal for your application. With three products launched this year only, CeramicSpeed is the supplier of a comprehensive and unique watt saving product package. By fully upgrading your bike with CeramicSpeed bearing products, like bottom brackets, pulley wheels, wheel kits, headset and optimised chains, you safeguard reduced drag in your drivetrain, extended durability and free speed.

The inside line on the world of competitive cycling

VELONOTES»

The great unknown

Which performances in cycling can we believe in, and which should we dismiss? We don't know. But that doesn't mean we can't love the sport. BY JOHN BRADLEY



We have two interns at VeloNews. They're both 21. They love cycling. They love it with the enthusiasm of youth. They love cycling despite having discovered it while drugs were decimating the sport. They were 12 years old when Floyd Landis happened. Watching cycling without suspicion is as foreign to them as going through airport security without removing their shoes. They never knew life before the inflection point.

Yet they think cycling is the best sport in the

world. When I ask one of them how he reconciles that sentiment with what he knows about doping, he says he thinks the peloton is cleaner now but that he can't fully embrace a lot of winning performances. "I wonder about Froome," he says. "When he wins like he did, it seems suspicious."

Our interns might never get to celebrate Tour wins with the unchecked enthusiasm I enjoyed when LeMond pipped Fignon in '89. But they still love the sport.

No performance in pro cycling happens in

isolation. Time is a river, and the waters of the Festina Affair, Lance Armstrong, pot belge, Puerto, and others swirl around every modern rider. That makes the skepticism about Chris Froome understandable. Or, rather, it makes skepticism understandable. Right now the doubt may be directed at Froome less because his performances have truly been otherworldly than because we suspect anyone in yellow.

The only way to avoid suspicion is to not win. Nibali faced repeated questions about doping



CHRIS FROOME

during last year's Tour and again in the offseason, when his Astana team continued to be, well, Team Astana. Froome is still fighting off accusations about 2013. Bradley Wiggins had to respond to questions about his Tour win and Team Sky's dominance in 2012. (His answers were short, and most of the words contained only four letters.)

Was Wiggins clean? Was Cadel Evans? Do we suspect Froome, or the yellow jersey?

Perhaps if Froome looked more graceful on a bike, we'd be more accepting. Maybe if he spoke as affably as Jens Voigt, we'd cheer for him more. He might have a bigger fan base if his arms didn't look like they should be blowing in the wind in front of a used car dealership. But the truth is he's not a fan favorite, and he's winning in a sport that has become emblematic of doping. That's tough to overcome.

The attitude of our sporting era is reflexive doubt. We scoff. We shrug. We suspect. But we don't know.

For a while, cyclists were doping in ways that the tests could catch. Reasoned Decision investigators were able to go back through the years and prove what many thought to be true. Year after year, race after race, the proof was strong enough to remove doubt.

We don't have that drumbeat of hard evidence now. The testers aren't catching as many riders. We can take that as an indication that the sport is cleaner, or we can take it as a sign that the cheaters have gotten smarter.

It's both, and proof of neither. We don't know.

We have some very smart analyses of sustained power and VO₂ maximums. Physiologists have extrapolated and spun both to bury Froome

and to praise him. We also have some incomplete data dumps from Sky regarding his power output. The numbers the team released weren't enough to put any arguments to bed. In fact, the combative manner in which Sky presented that data probably made the whole effort counterproductive from a PR perspective.

So which performances can we believe, and which ones should we dismiss? We don't know. Was Froome pumping enhanced blood when he dropped everyone on the stage 10 climb to La Pierre-Saint-Martin, or was it, as David Brailsford suggested, that he was tapping out less than six watts per kilogram and his rivals just had a bad day? We don't know. Certainly Froome's ride wasn't something out of the ordinary for him. He's been competitive and on an upward arc since turning pro. If anyone's rides seemed extraordinary during stage 10, they were Richie Porte's and Alejandro Valverde's. Those guys were driving the pace up most of the climb and still finished well.

Calm down. I'm not insinuating that Porte has started doping or that Valverde hasn't stopped. We don't know. We don't know about the guy who grabbed the prime at your Tuesday night crit, the way we don't know about anyone right up until they test positive or someone finds conclusive evidence. I'm just saying that the accusations leveled at Froome might have less to do with his actual ride than with who he is and what he's wearing.

His stage 10 win wasn't proof of doping. At 59 seconds over Porte in second place and 1:04 over Nairo Quintana in third, it wasn't even all that impressive by Tour standards, at least relative to the field. In 1986, Greg LeMond won stage 13 in the Pyrenees by over a minute. Five days later, he

and Bernard Hinault rolled across the finish atop Alpe d'Huez together more than five minutes ahead of the third-placed rider.

In 1986, rides like that inspired. In 2015, far lesser rides inspire letters like the one we received minutes after Froome had crossed the finish line in La Pierre-Saint-Martin. It began, "One reason there is a proliferation of doping in cycling is because *Velo* and the rest of the media do not call out the obvious dopers."

We call them out plenty. (Someday maybe I'll share some of the letters we get begging us to stop with all the doping stories.) Few people are bigger cycling fans than the writers at *Velo*, and few are as aware of its problems. But whether you define "obvious" in journalistic, WADA, or legal terms, Froome's not an obvious doper. And we don't know.


We'll continue to dig for the truth. We're reporters first, jaded and suspicious to our cores. We don't believe that cycling—or any other sport—has solved the doping problem. But we still love cycling. The key is accepting that those things don't have to be mutually exclusive. In a radio interview during the Tour—after a long tirade about how he didn't believe in Froome—the journalist and vocal anti-doping crusader Paul Kimmage was asked why he still watches the race. "I'm cursed," he mumbled, before scrambling for a way to defend being a fan.

"I'm amazed by the courage," he said. "William Bonnet in that massive crash in the first week, ripped from head to shoulder—extraordinary courage. These cyclists have extraordinary courage and do extraordinary things."

Modern cycling fans—all of us, Kimmage included—rationalize things until the results fit with the way we see things. Wins by riders we've decided to believe in are evidence that people can race clean. Victories by anyone else are proof that the sport is still filthy. We unload all of our accumulated doubt on a handful of riders so that it doesn't cloud our enjoyment of the rest of the race. I guarantee that even the raging idiots who were so certain about Froome during the Tour that they were spitting and throwing urine at him were then turning around and cheering for other riders.

It's okay to love cycling and still have doubts. Our interns have figured out how to do that. I've gotten more comfortable not always knowing. I hope Kimmage can get to a place where he doesn't see his love of cycling as a curse.

As Froome has repeatedly said, you can't prove a negative. When someone fails a test, we know. Absent that, it's down to faith. If Froome is indeed riding clean, he is the only person in the world who can ever know that for a fact. The rest of us, even those closest to him, can only believe.

Or not. It's our choice whether or not to live with the ambiguity. But we don't know. 

An earlier version of this story appeared on VeloNews.com.

Andrew Talansky: U.S. National Time Trial Champ, 2015

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“I just want to disappear.”

— Tejay van Garderen (BMC Racing), after pulling out of the Tour



“I’m okay. I just hit my head on a lamppost, but I’m alright.”

— Geraint Thomas (Team Sky) on hitting a telephone pole with his head after being struck by Warren Barguil (Giant-Alpecin) on the descent of the Col de Manse

“Either you get time cut, or you get hurt so bad you’re put in a car that takes you home. That’s the only way you leave the Tour.”

— Nathan Haas (Cannondale-Garmin), after suffering through repeated gastrointestinal troubles in the first week of the Tour



“It’s a lynching.”

— Alejandro Valverde (Movistar), on the scrutiny of Chris Froome

“I’ve just had one of the toughest days of my entire life on a bike. I wanted to try something and drop Alejandro [Valverde] on the Glandon, but it was more of an attack with the heart than with the legs.”

— Alberto Contador (Tinkoff-Saxo), after stage 18



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Spanish spectacle

Will the Vuelta a España prove to be the most exciting grand tour of the year? **By Andrew Hood**



WIDE OPEN

Defending champion Alberto Contador (in red) will not race the Vuelta, but a slew of other GC contenders will make for an unpredictable and intense battle.

They say the third time is the charm.

The Vuelta a España, the season's third, last, and youngest grand tour, is standing tall, consistently delivering the most exciting and unpredictable racing of the season.

Why? A combination of factors inevitably gives everyone in the Vuelta a reason to race hard. Some are returning from crashes or trying to make up for a scarcity of results earlier in the season. Others are hoping to top off their form ahead of the world championships. WorldTour novices may be getting their first crack at a GC leadership role. Those lacking a contract for the following season are desperate to showcase their talents. The list goes on.

The 2015 edition will be no exception. Every bad day at the Tour de France was a good day for the Vuelta.

"This Tour hasn't gone as I had hoped," says an exasperated Joaquim Rodríguez (Katusha) at the Tour. The Spaniard won two Tour stages, but his GC hopes evaporated in the Pyrenees. "I had hoped for the podium, but now I will think about the Vuelta."

That frustration echoed across a Tour dominated by Team Sky. The first half of the Tour

went so poorly for 2014 Tour winner Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) that team boss Alexander Vinokourov rumbled he might send him to the Vuelta. The same was true for the other two men who stood on the podium in 2014, Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) and Jean-Christophe Péraud (Ag2r La Mondiale). Both are reserving tickets for Spain.

Crashes in July also saw riders such as Tom Dumoulin (Giant-Alpecin), Fabian Cancellara (Trek Factory Racing), Nacer Bouhanni (Cofidis), and Tony Martin (Etixx-Quick-Step) change their vacation plans.

On the cusp of a podium finish in Paris, Tejay van Garderen (BMC Racing) abandoned the Tour due to illness and has set his sights on the Spanish grand tour. "This is 100 percent my decision," he says. "It would be nice to go out and try to win the USA Pro Challenge again. But after what happened at the Tour, I need to prove myself on a bigger scale."

The ingredients are in place for a typically wild Vuelta ride: short stages, plenty of elevation gain, and a hungry peloton packed with a mix of GC debutantes, world championship-bound superstars, and the Spanish armada proudly

racing on home roads. (Alejandro Valverde and Nairo Quintana have both committed to starting for Movistar.)

Don't think the 2015 Vuelta will be some leftover affair, however. Hot new talents such as Joe Dombrowski (Cannondale-Garmin), Julian Alaphilippe (Etixx-Quick-Step), and Mikel Landa (Astana) will race. And there were other hot rumors that even Chris Froome (Sky) and Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) would be heading south as well.

SURPRISES AND SUSPENSE

The best GC battle of 2014 didn't take place at the Giro d'Italia or Tour de France; it happened in Spain, where Contador and Froome swapped blows until the final stages.

The Giro might be billed as the toughest race in the world's most beautiful place, but the Giro is often a three-pony race. The Tour? It rarely lives up to the hype.

That leaves the Vuelta, which has taken place in August or September since 1995, to keep things very interesting.

"The Vuelta is the most unpredictable grand tour of the year," says veteran Samuel Sánchez, who will lead BMC Racing. "The Giro is cen-



SPANISH ARMADA

Perennial contender Joaquim Rodríguez will battle Alejandro Valverde across eight summit finishes.

tered around the Italians, and the Tour is controlled by the big favorites. Anything can happen in the Vuelta.”

The Vuelta has carved out a niche for itself by delivering a climb-heavy product built around shorter stages and explosive finales. The Spanish grand tour started to reduce the length of its stages in the early 2000s, a trend that ASO has now introduced to the Tour. A 230km stage at the Vuelta is as rare as snow during the Spanish summer.

“The Vuelta now has its own personality,” says Vuelta race director Javier Guillén. “Explosive finales, shorter stages, new climbs, original stage starts—these are the ingredients of our race. We now have an important identity, and we will continue building that.”

The 2015 Vuelta follows this newly minted script, with eight summit finishes, two time trials (one team, one individual), four hilltop finales, and a mix of transition stages for the sprinters. In all, the 70th Vuelta promises to provide a worthy canvas upon which the strongest and smartest rider can paint his name.

“The Vuelta isn’t easy anymore,” says MTN-Qhubeka’s Tyler Farrar, a veteran of four Vueltas. “Each year it seems to get harder and harder. There are not many chances for the sprinters. I can see why the climbers love it.”

The race opens on August 22 along Spain’s Costa del Sol with a team time trial near Porto Banus, the haunt of Europe’s filthy rich. Then, it will trace across sunny Andalucía for the opening week. A few transition stages through Murcia and Valencia bring the Vuelta to its first rest day on September 1 in Andorra. Heat will undoubtedly be a factor in the first half of the race.

After what should be an absolutely explosive day in stage 11, with six climbs packed into 138km across Andorra, the Vuelta will skip across northern Spain before three decisive

race-making days in Asturias. The final few stages could prove to be anti-climactic, at least by Vuelta standards, with a 39km time trial on the flats of Castilla y León ahead of three transition stages, including one hard mountain stage, before the Sunday finale in Madrid.

THE RICHMOND EFFECT

The Richmond world championships, the first in the U.S. since 1986, are also having an effect on the Spanish tour.

Going into 2013, every world champion since 2000 had raced the Vuelta before winning the rainbow stripes. That changed when Rui Costa won in Tuscany in 2013. Michal Kwiatkowski won in Ponferrada in 2014 without racing the Vuelta, too. This year it appears that even more worlds faves will skip the Spanish tour.

Why? Richmond.

“I think it’s better to go to Quebec and Montreal, and race on a circuit, like you will see at Richmond,” says 2012 world champion Philippe Gilbert (BMC Racing). “Then you can stay there in North America for two weeks, and maybe have a race the week before the worlds. It’s a long trip to make from Europe.”

That sentiment is shared by defending world champ Kwiatkowski, who also indicated he would race the WorldTour one-days in Canada, and stay in North America. More than a few are

wary of how the transatlantic flight could affect their performance.

THE BATTLE

A number of GC stars have already confirmed they’ll start the Vuelta, including Rodríguez, Valverde, and Quintana. One of them could very well take the victory. But the weeks following the Tour will see a flurry of confirmations and changes in plans.

Expect many of the top French riders to start the Vuelta as well. Tour de France owner ASO (Amaury Sport Organisation) took complete control of the Vuelta two years ago. That gives the Spanish tour a very strong French flavor, with some of the same sponsors as the Tour visible along the roadsides of Spain. French teams looking to appease ASO will commit strong squads, so riders such as Thibaut Pinot (FDJ), Romain Bardet (Ag2r La Mondiale), and Nacer Bouhanni (Cofidis) will likely start.

The arrival of a rider such as Nibali or even Froome would dramatically alter the dynamics of the race. With two very close second place finishes at the Vuelta (in his breakout 2011 season and last year against Contador), Froome has some unsettled business with the race.

Perhaps the entire “Fantastic Four” will show up at the Vuelta, and everyone will have the chance to see the fight that evaporated in July. **V**

THE 70TH VUELTA A ESPAÑA

STAGE 1, August 22

Porto Banus to Marbella (TTT), 7.4km

STAGE 2, August 23

Alhaurín de la Torre, 165km

STAGE 3, August 24

Mijas to Málaga, 165km

STAGE 4, August 25

Estepona to Vejer de la Frontera, 203km

STAGE 5, August 26

Rota to Alcalá de Guadaira, 182km

STAGE 6, August 27

Cordoba to Cazorla, 204km

STAGE 7, August 28

Jodar to Caplleira, 188km

STAGE 8, August 29

Puebla de Don Fabrique to Murcia, 188km

STAGE 9, August 30

Torrevieja to Cumbre del Sol, 169km

STAGE 10, August 31

Castellón, 152km

REST DAY, September 1

STAGE 11, September 2

Andorra to Els Cortals de Encamp, 138km

STAGE 12, September 3

Andorra to Lleida, 173km

STAGE 13, September 4

Catalayud to Tarazona, 168km

STAGE 14, September 5

Vitoria to Fuente del Chivo, 213km

STAGE 15, September 6

Comillas to Jitu de Escarandi, 175km

STAGE 16, September 7

Luarca to Ermita del Alba, 184km

REST DAY, September 8

STAGE 17, September

Burgos (TT), 39km

STAGE 18, September 10

Roa de Duero to Riaza, 204km

STAGE 19, September 11

Medina del Campo to Avila, 185km

STAGE 20, September 12

San Lorenzo de El Escorial to Cercedilla, 181km

STAGE 21, September 13

Alcalá de Henares to Madrid, 94km

TOTAL: 3,377KM

Ask a Pro

Deep philosophical advice from
a roadie sage by Phil Gaimon



What's a product that pros might buy on their own, regardless of sponsorship?

I've been training in SoCal heat lately, so the first thing that comes to mind is oversized water bottles. Teams usually provide the standard 20-ouncer, but you can find bigger ones, which means less stopping and fewer dollars wasted at gas stations.

While I try to save you money, a better pro might recommend a sports car and a condominium in Monaco.

I'm not sure what to make of Chris Froome's missed drug test. Have you ever missed one?

The rules allow you to miss two. Then, if you miss a third test in the same year, you're in big trouble. I understand the skepticism if you've read the tell-alls about guys dodging testers or hiding up in the mountains after an EPO binge. But from personal experience, I also understand that it'd be pretty easy to miss a test if they're after you enough.

"Whereabouts" are filed quarterly. And if you think a bike racer knows where they'll be next weekend, let alone two months from now, you're crazy. So riders are always filing updates. Imagine the conversation if you end up at a woman's house: "Am I spending the night? What's your address? You know, in case they need to come test my blood or urine."

I did miss a test once. When you file whereabouts, you give instructions on how to find the place or get into the building. I was living in a crappy apartment, which had a code to enter the building, but the machine had long been broken. The tester arrived at 6 a.m. and didn't know the code, and my phone was off. So I was notified of a missed test. There's no whereabouts violation in my record now, so either it was removed after I explained the situation, or the tester realized what had happened and never filed it.

A masters racer in my area was suspended for using EPO a few years ago. Now he's back in the races. Should I be okay with that?

It's wrong whether he's a pro or an amateur. But I think dopers in the professional ranks and dopers in the masters categories are grapefruits and oranges. (Not apples and oranges.) They're



close enough to both be in the citrus family.

Pros will probably return to whatever pays the bills. They'll know that they'll have to deal with hate from fans and riders, but you can't exactly blame them as long as the rules allow them to return once their suspension has been served. A masters racer (or even an amateur) returning after a suspension is confusing, because I'm sure it's no fun to sit in a pack of dudes who don't want you there. And he's not in it for the money. Why not use the two-year "vacation" to get into ultra marathons instead? Maybe something dangerous, like base-jumping? Or perhaps this racer is approaching an age where Scrabble might be more appropriate.

Basically, welcome to cycling. You get to judge and decide whom you want to be friends with, and then be judged for that. The best part: There's no right answer! Before you complain, understand that my answer here is going to result in hate mail that says, "You're too easy on the dopers" and hate mail that says, "You're too hard on the dopers." (Also, try racing in Europe with a tattoo that says, "CLEAN.")

Phil Gaimon races for Optum-Kelly Benefit Strategies. His website is philthethrill.net.

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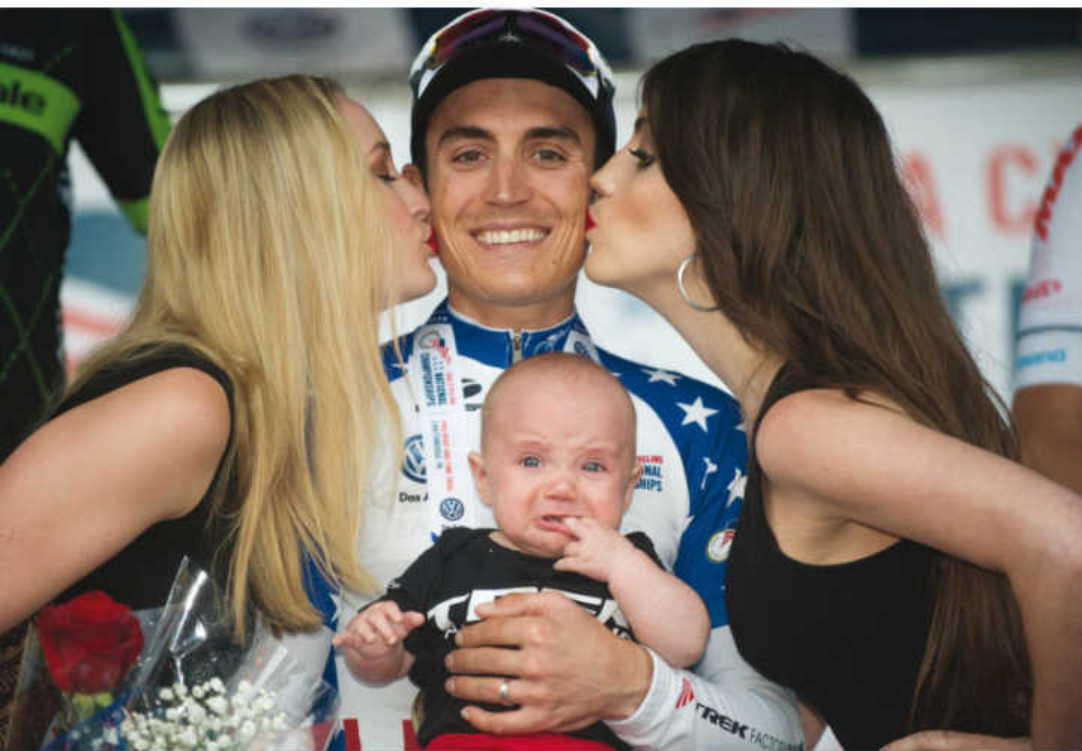
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Sitting In with Matthew Busche

By Dane Cash | Richmond, Virginia

TREK FACTORY RACING REDESIGNED ITS KIT FOR 2015, throwing in red accents to enliven the design. In late May, Matthew Busche took a trip to Chattanooga and added even more color to his jersey. He came home from Tennessee sporting the red, white, and blue of U.S. national road race champion.

Busche's 2015 championship victory was the second of his career; the all-rounder born in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, beat George Hincapie to the line by inches to win his first title in 2011. This year, he made a daring attack with Joe Dombrowski late in the race before dropping the lithe climber in the final few kilometers to come home alone.

It was the biggest result thus far in 2015 for Busche. Securing a slot on the American team for Richmond worlds in September is among his major targets for the remainder of the year. *Velo* caught up with Busche in July; he was in Richmond to inspect the worlds route, despite the fact that his spot on the team had not yet been confirmed.

What are your impressions of the route?

I didn't ride the front part of the course, but the last part of the course will definitely be difficult. I think Libby [Hill], 23rd [Street], and Governor [Street] are going to be super, super difficult, especially 16 times. I wouldn't imagine it's going to be a big group at the finish.

How do you think the course will play into Team USA's plans? Does it suit the top American riders likely to make the squad?

It's hard to say, for sure. It's not a pure climber's course; it's not a pure sprinter's course. It really favors someone like [Fabian] Cancellara, [Peter] Sagan, those guys. [Greg] Van Avermaet, [John] Degenkolb,

you name it. Unfortunately, I can't straight-up think of an American who would be really in the mix with the favorites. Tyler Farrar? I'm not sure he's going to be there in the end for that. And unfortunately Taylor Phinney's been out for over a year now and he might have been one of our best shots. But on the other hand, this actually could be a really good course for a dark horse like Alex Howes. You know, running through the names in my head, depending on who the selection is, maybe some kind of late breakaway could steal the day. A guy like Ben King—if he's on the team he'll be extra motivated because it's practically in his back yard. So it could come down to anything, who knows?

Do you think your national championship title boosts your chances of making the worlds team?

Yeah. It used to be an automatic selection but they recently changed the criteria—unless we get the full allotment of nine guys (which the team did not; see page TK), it's no longer an automatic selection, so then I just have to go through the committee. I think generally, I'd definitely be on the long list of riders and hopefully on the short list. Hopefully, at the end of the day, I'll be here in September.

You mentioned Fabian Cancellara as a strong candidate for success on this parcours. He's your teammate for most of the year. Do trade team dynamics play a role at worlds? If Team USA's chances are looking slim at the end of the day and Fabian Cancellara seems to have a shot, does trade team loyalty push you to help out?

I don't know. That would be a hard call. I think you're competitors that day, you're rivals. I don't see any situation where anyone would really want to give up winning a world championship regardless of if it was their best friend. So I guess if it came down to Fabian and me, I'm going to take my chances and try to beat him.

What impact will hosting the world championships in the U.S. have on the road racing scene in the States?

Hopefully it's going to give a big boost to cycling across the U.S. It's been almost 30 years since the worlds were here. I haven't been in the sport that long but I've already seen kind of a roller-coaster ride—some races die, a few races come around. I think the sport is growing, but it's very slow and it's not a tier-one sport in the U.S.—such as football, basketball, or baseball—so hopefully this can elevate the sport a little bit, bring it up another level and, who knows, it would be wonderful if this could spark more cycling and more races. [Maybe it helps] bring back some races of old—Tour de Georgia, Tour of Missouri.



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PACK OF ALL TRADES

The right hydration pack combines smart weight distribution and a logical layout to accommodate your dirt adventures By Dan Cavallari | Photos by Brad Kaminski

Knowing which hydration pack to buy comes down to knowing what type of rides you'll be doing. Are you a podium-chasing cross-country racer; an all-day, high-miles trail rider; or an enduro shredder who likes to hit the lifts? Knowing your riding style will help you narrow the field, which fall into a few loosely overlapping categories: the minimalist cross-country racer ready for fast hardpack; the roomier trail adventurer on the hunt for climbs and descents; and the all-mountain warrior prepared for hucking.

These packs differ in size, weight, materials, and layout. Lightweight packs may be ideal for your race pursuits, but if low miles and big air are your thing, heavy-duty materials trump a feathery feel.

When choosing the pack that's right for you, look first for the one that fits best. Next, think about what you're likely to take with you, and be sure the pack allows you to arrange your accessories so weight doesn't shift when you're throwing your body around on tight singletrack. We looked at a mix of packs to find those with the best capacities, layouts, and fit options. One of these packs is waiting for your next adventure.



OSPREY SYNCRO 10 \$110

CAPACITY: 10 LITERS

PLUS 2.5-LITER BLADDER

★★★★☆

The Syncro is a smartly designed pack in most regards. It has the right number of pockets in the right places, and accessing them is easy thanks to three-quarter zips that run down the sides. Like too many hydration packs, however, it lacks hip pockets for easy access while it's being worn. The Lidlock helmet attachment is convenient, but works only with helmets that have vents to pass it through. So you're out of luck, Smith Forefront owners. The integrated rain cover and pocket for stowing your sunglasses are both nice touches; the ventilated back panel keeps sweat from piggybacking all ride long; and built-in baffles on the reservoir prevent sloshing. But the bite valve has a hard plastic front that's unpleasant to use, and when the pack is fully loaded, it has a tendency to shift laterally no matter how the straps are adjusted. A stabilizing system at the hips could help.



DAKINE DRAFTER 12L \$125

CAPACITY: 12 LITERS

PLUS 3-LITER BLADDER

★★★★☆

This burly 2.4-pound pack is built for enduro and all-mountain riding—perfect for all-day adventures, not so great for races where weight matters. It's stout, but if you're in need of a lot of storage, the Drafter is comfortable even when weighed down. Much of the weight comes from the thick 400D nylon ripstop fabric used throughout to make the pack bombproof. A bit more weight comes courtesy of the stiff back panel within the Air Mesh back panel system, an addition presumably intended as a layer of spine protection. It's well ventilated and kept us cool on long summer rides, and the straps offer plenty of adjustability for different torso lengths. The interior pockets are laid out logically for tools and tubes, and there's even a sleeve for a pump. We would have liked hip pockets for quick access to food, though. We like the high-flow bite valve and the magnetic clip that pulls the hose out of the way between drinks. Despite its weight, the pack stays in place and doesn't shift side to side. For downhill days and long all-mountain rides, the Drafter is a solid choice.



ERGON BX2 \$120

CAPACITY: 10 LITERS

EXPANDABLE TO 11.5 LITERS; NO BLADDER INCLUDED

★★★★☆

Long-torso riders, rejoice. If you have trouble finding a pack that fits right, the BX2 is for you. Its simple adjustable-fit system accommodates riders of all sizes, and the Contour Fit aluminum bar allows you to customize the pack to the shape of your back, which is great for lateral stability. This bag can hold a lot, yet when the expansion zip is closed, the pack shrinks down into a very sleek, low-profile package. Unfortunately, the BX2 doesn't include a bladder, which is a major shortcoming; even if you had one, there isn't a good place to store it. Putting a bladder in the same pocket as your multi-tool could lead to a very wet disaster. The included rain cover isn't integrated and takes too much time and effort to put on. Who wants to be fidgeting with that when the rain starts falling? Still, the BX2 offers versatile sizing and storage. The well-placed back pads deliver above-average breathability, and there's a hip pocket for easy snacking. If fit and expandable capacity are what you're after, this one delivers.



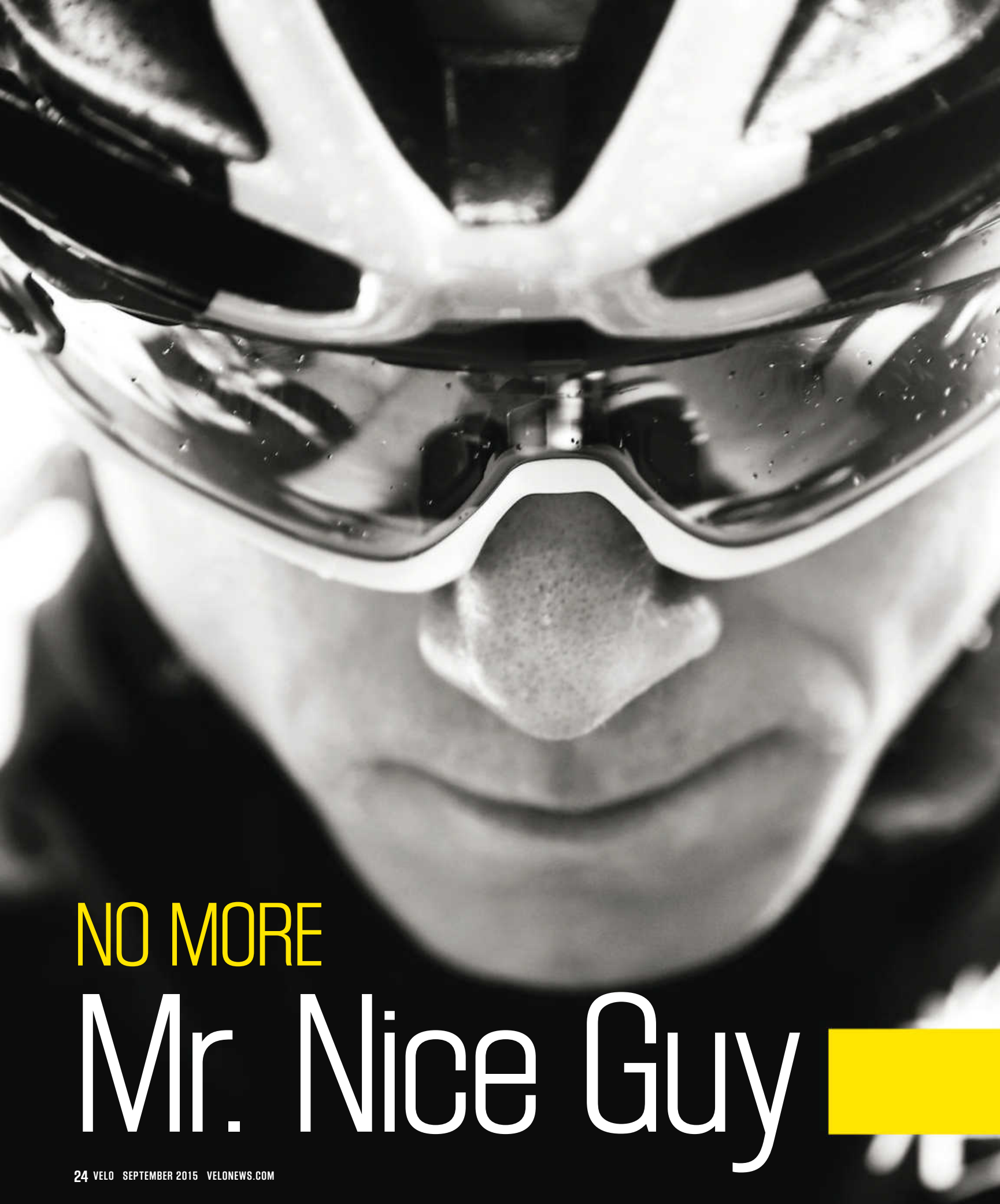
CAMELBAK VOLT 13 LR \$125

CAPACITY: 10 LITERS

PLUS 3-LITER BLADDER

While it doesn't allow for a ton of breathability, the Volt never feels overly hot, and the narrow design leaves a lot of your back uncovered and able to breathe. The way in which weight is distributed is something every pack designer should take note of. The Antidote lumbar reservoir is a squat bladder that slips into a low pocket to keep the weight on your hips and off your shoulders. This leads to exceptional comfort and fit, as well as stability when you're threading down twisty singletrack. The best features are the hip pockets, which are big enough for snacks, phones, or multitools. Inside, the main pockets are well positioned, and there's plenty of capacity for a light rain jacket and arm warmers. Toting your helmet post-ride is quick and easy with helmet strap tabs. Despite all this, the pack is remarkably light, thanks to the feathery nylon used throughout. If you're rolling all day, you might find yourself wanting more storage space for food and clothing, but the Volt is ideal for everyday rides and self-supported cross-country races.





NO MORE

Mr. Nice Guy





"I try to be as polite as possible, but don't take that for weakness. Don't take that as you can push me around, or that you can get away with disrespecting me or my teammates. I will stand up for what I believe in." — CHRIS FROOME

How Chris Froome won the Tour on two fronts

BY ANDREW HOOD | PARIS, FRANCE

BRYAN LINDON/GETTY IMAGES; BRAKETROUGH MEDIA

THE DEFINING MOMENT of the 2015 Tour de France didn't come on the Alpe d'Huez or in the crosswinds along the Dutch coast. Nor did it come when a spectator doused Chris Froome with a cup of urine.

If you're looking for the moment that made crystal clear the state of things not just in the Tour but in pro cycling in general, look to the finish of stage 6. In the tense, finger-pointing aftermath of a finish-line pileup at Le Havre that could have ended several riders' Tours (and did end the ride of Etixx-Quick-Step's Tony Martin), the new Chris Froome—or, if you believe what team insiders say—the real Chris Froome, emerged.

In the confusion of the crash, champion Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) incorrectly assumed Froome had caused the tumble. He threw a

water bottle, either at Froome or in his general vicinity, and unfurled some sharp insults. After crossing the line, Froome stormed onto the Astana bus to "clarify the situation," as he later put it. But according to those who witnessed the confrontation, there was nothing cordial about their chat. One rider confirmed that Froome was in Nibali's face, and the pair had to be physically separated.

Welcome to Froome 2.0.

"I try to be as polite as possible, but don't take that for weakness," Froome said during one of his Tour press conferences. "Don't take that as you can push me around, or that you can get away with disrespecting me or my teammates. I will stand up for what I believe in."

At the 2015 Tour, he had to stand up for himself on two fronts. And he showed that he can do it.



SECOND BEST

At 25, Nairo Quintana has many years left to climb to the top step of the podium. He pushed Froome in the Alps, but came up 1:12 short of taking Colombia's first Tour title.

REINVENTING TOUR

TV

Watching the race is about to get a whole lot cooler

The formula for cycling television production hasn't changed in decades: Combine a helicopter and a smattering of motorcycle cameras with a pair of talkative blokes in a booth. Ask them to tread, for hours, the fine line between being deep enough to interest die-hard fans and simple enough to appeal to casual viewers—all in a sport so nuanced and complex it's constantly referred to as "chess on wheels."

Have you ever watched chess on TV?

Luckily, things are getting a lot better for both sets of viewers. The 2015 Tour de France saw the introduction of two thoroughly modern partners. GoPro's on-bike cameras provided such visceral, YouTube-friendly imagery that even general-audience shows like "Good Morning America" were airing it. And tech firm Dimension Data tested a beta version of a website that used small pods on each rider's bike to stream real-time data on speed, time gaps, and geo-location.

The combination of these two companies—live, on-bike video footage and real-time position and performance data for every rider in the race—could change the way we view cycling. It's not hard to imagine a future in which fans can pull up the official Tour website and click on a rider's name to see not just speed and position but also the live stream from the GoPro mounted under his handlebars.

"This year really proved the concept of what kind of content we can get and the social engagement and the awareness we can bring the sport," says Todd Ballard, GoPro's senior director of lifestyle marketing.

The greater hurdle is integration with the Tour's major broadcast partners, which can be resistant to change.

But change is coming. Dimension Data pulled 600,000 people into its live-data site despite the hiccups and limited functionality that come with running a beta test. And even with GoPro's limited roll-out—it had cameras on only a handful of bikes each day and wasn't broadcasting live—the company was racking up millions of views.

That those views were on YouTube and not NBC surely didn't go unnoticed. — CALEY FRETZ

On the bike, he had to fend off the two-pronged Movistar attack of Nairo Quintana and Alejandro Valverde, which nearly dethroned him on l'Alpe d'Huez, in the Tour's thrilling *dénouement*. And off the bike, Froome had to battle against a level of hostility from angry spectators and incredulous journalists that seemed worse than anything in Tour history.

"I think after everything he's endured, Chris has shown his real mettle," Brailsford told British television at the finish line in Paris. "[Froome's detractors] don't see what we see every day. He never flinched."

After crashing out in the first week last year, Froome brought a steely new resolve to Utrecht. He was older, wiser, and more determined.

"He was so focused to win this Tour," says Nicolas Roche, one of Froome's key domestiques. "He is very sure of himself on the bike. He knows no one can beat him. That gives him confidence in the decisive moments."

Brailsford, too, says Froome revealed newfound composure, especially when compared to 2013, when he was thrown into the Tour media maelstrom for the first time as outright leader

at Sky. This time around, Froome was ready for the challenges that come with winning, and the pressures of the yellow jersey.

"Chris is a polite, nice guy off the bike, but on the bike, he's the most resilient character," Brailsford says. "I don't think I've ever met anyone like him. The way he puts up with the abuse he gets, he's so composed. He deserves more credit than he gets."

FUELING THE STORM

Anticipation was ripe before the Tour's first mountain stage, up the category 1 climb to La Pierre-Saint-Martin, lost in the clouds high in the Pyrenees at the end of stage 10.

In a matter of minutes, however, Froome destroyed the drama, throwing down one of the most devastating attacks in recent Tour history. Alberto Contador (Tinkoff-Saxo) lost 2:51 and all hope of winning the Giro-Tour double. His sport director, Sean Yates, would later categorize it as the Spaniard's worst drubbing ever. Nibali was out of contention as well, bleeding 4:25. Even Quintana, considered by many to be



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the best pure climber in a generation, lost 1:04.

As Froome and his teammates celebrated, the flames of suspicion and derision spread across the Internet and onto the roadside. Spectators and journalists alike lashed out. Antoine Vayer, the former Festina trainer and fulltime thorn in the side of the cycling establishment, said Froome's numbers bordered on the unnatural. Laurent Jalabert and Cedric Vasseur, two ex-pros who raced during the EPO era, questioned Froome's performance from their positions in broadcasting—an irony that Froome called "rich."

The tension reached a boiling point after the Pyrenees, where Sky riders Luke Rowe and Richie Porte also came in for abuse, the latter being punched on the side of the road. Television images captured a spectator spitting on Froome and another giving him an "up yours" gesture. Both were outdone by the guy who doused him with a cup of urine.

"I just see [the abuse] coming along with the yellow jersey," Froome explained after yet another day of roadside hostility. "I've done nothing wrong; I've done nothing to deserve this. I don't take it personally."

Incredibly, Froome never lost his cool. There were no Wiggins-like outbursts, no Armstrong



"I just see [the abuse] coming along with the yellow jersey. I've done nothing wrong; I've done nothing to deserve this. I don't take it personally." — CHRIS FROOME

THE GREEN MACHINE

Peter Sagan (Tinkoff-Saxo) attacked relentlessly during the 2015 Tour de France. On the flats, on the climbs, in the crosswinds, and—in one of the most spectacular descents in modern Tour history—off the Col de Manse during stage 16, Sagan was the Tour's most charismatic protagonist. The only men who were safe were the top GC guys, and even they could find sanctuary only on the steepest of mountain passes.

The 25-year-old Slovak looked and raced very much like Eddy Merckx—to whom he is often compared—with one significant difference: Merckx won. Though Sagan left Paris with his fourth straight green points jersey—finishing second five times and in the top-5 in 11 out of 21 stages—he didn't win once.

"I am not angry. It's not easy to win, because everyone is always looking to me," Sagan says. "I made a nice show during this Tour. I attacked every day that I could. I want to win. It's not for a lack of trying."

And therein lies the conundrum. Sagan's ability to climb what other fastmen can't is his great strength, but it's also his handicap. Built more like a running back than a cyclist, Sagan is a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none.

"Peter is such a great rider that it is almost

a disadvantage for him," explains Tinkoff-Saxo sport director Stephen De Jongh. "He can climb so well, he is there with climbers—and he gets second. And in the flat stages, he doesn't have the high-end speed to beat Greipel—and he gets second."

The lone day he didn't attack was the one that suited him most, across the cobbles of stage 4, when he still managed to take third. In a testament to his sacrifice, he ignored the temptation to follow promising moves and faithfully followed team orders to help usher Alberto Contador across the treacherous pave.

That prompted a joke among his rabid fans in Slovakia: "Sagan has three brakes in this Tour: the front, the back, and Alberto Contador."

Sagan was undeniably one of the central protagonists of the 2015 Tour. Even outspoken team owner Oleg Tinkov, who had been chastising him all season for underperforming, couldn't help himself, calling Sagan, "the strongest rider in the Tour. He is even stronger than Chris Froome."

Perhaps Sagan didn't win a stage, but he went home with another green jersey and legions of new fans.

"I race to have fun," Sagan says. "To do this job and not enjoy it, I cannot understand. And to pass the entire day in the peloton, I cannot understand, either."

After Sagan's exploits on the Col de Manse, when he again finished second, a Chinese



television reporter asked where he found the courage for death-defying stunts. Sagan didn't hesitate with his response: "Because I have big balls." — A.H.

PETER SAGAN AT THE TOUR DE FRANCE

- 2012** Three wins, five top-5s, green jersey ahead of André Greipel (421-280pts)
- 2013** One win, eight top-5s, green jersey ahead of Mark Cavendish (409-312)
- 2014** Zero wins, nine top-5s, green jersey ahead of Alexander Kristoff (431-282)
- 2015** Zero wins, 11 top-5s, green jersey ahead of Greipel (432-366)

LIONEL BONAVENTURE/GETTY IMAGES; CORVUS

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THE LOOK

As Froome unclipped with a mechanical on stage 19, Nibali looked over his shoulder, then attacked. The Italian said he was unaware of Froome's issues. Froome felt otherwise.

blacklists. Even lesser riders will sometimes refuse to speak to journalists when things don't go their way. Froome sat through daily 30-minute-plus press conferences, patiently answering every question, day after day.

"I do feel as if this year, even though it's the second time for me, as a team we've been up against so much," he said during one of those press conferences. "There's been so much going on in the background away from the race which could've taken a lot of focus away from what we needed to achieve in terms of the racing."

And what if Froome is actually clean? He's certainly never going to be accused of being the most elegant rider, but maybe some of his harshest critics are overlooking, or refuse to see, what could be the biggest cycling story in a generation.

After all, Froome is now the first rider to win more than one Tour in the era of the biological passport, which was introduced in 2008. Much has been made of his performances, yet the 1:12 winning margin over Quintana was the narrowest in the Tour since 2008, when Carlos Sastre beat Cadel Evans by 58 seconds.

To combat the growing suspicions, Sky reversed its long-standing policy of guarding what it calls its "trade secrets" and publicly released important data points from Froome's climb up La Pierre-Saint-Martin.

Pundits and experts disassembled Froome's power numbers from that day—both the data Sky released and what various sports scientists said the real numbers would have been—but the truth is the winning differences came in the

crosswinds of stage 2, the time bonuses, and a vicious attack up the Mur de Huy in stage 3.

Froome certainly looked human in the closing stages. He picked up a bug from Porte, something the team desperately tried to hide from its rivals. Froome barely managed to hang on against Quintana's daring attack on l'Alpe d'Huez.

"I was dying a thousand deaths on the Alp," Froome says. "There were a few moments when I thought I could have lost everything."

PICKING THE MOMENT

To understand how Froome won this Tour, one needs to travel to the early season training camps on Spain's Tenerife. Froome and a few select teammates spent weeks training and sleeping at altitude. Their lodging was a government-run hotel perched on the rocky, desolate upper reaches of the Teide crater.

"It's pretty miserable up there," says Porte. "The Wi-Fi doesn't work. There's only bad Spanish TV. All you do is ride, recover, and sleep."

Or travel back even further, to Sky's first years in the peloton. The team's head of athlete performance, Tim Kerrison, spent the first two years calculating what it would take to win the Tour. He broke down every major climb, figuring out the power numbers his riders would need to hit. Sky's mantra, then and now: "Train hard, race easy." Froome drinks it up.

"I love the sacrifices, the training, the hard work," he says. "That's what gets me out of bed in the morning. I love riding my bike. I love

pushing my body to the limit. I love the freedom that cycling gives you."

Three weeks before the Tour, Froome, Roche, and sport director Nicolas Portal scouted the La Pierre-Saint-Martin climb, scene of Froome's stage 10 attack. He immediately saw the potential to do some damage on the climb, given the extended middle sector that averages a 10 percent gradient before easing off at the top. It would be ideal for making a gap and then driving home the wedge.

The timing helped, too. Stage 10 would be the first foray into the mountains and would fall after the first rest day and nine brutal stages across northern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Froome knew it would be decisive.

"After seeing that stage, I said to them, 'I am going to attack here, and make my move here,'" Froome says. "That was my strategy. Later, Quintana said he was going to attack in the Alps. And my tactic was to try to hang on."

Coming into this year's mountain-heavy Tour, Froome got even leaner, sacrificing power against the clock to gain an edge going uphill. He lost so much time-trial ability that he finished 39th in the opening-day time trial, 50 seconds behind stage winner Rohan Dennis (BMC Racing)—a result Froome called his most disappointing of the Tour.

THE NEW REALITY

Cycling has entered the Froome era. He has won two Tours in three years and could be sitting on a hat-trick if he hadn't crashed out

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— CHRIS FROOME

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“Froomey is always joking around. We also see how hard he works, and how tough he is. We’ll give everything for Froomey when it counts.”

— GERAINT THOMAS

in 2014. But his grand tour run really started at the 2011 Vuelta, which he lost by just 13 seconds. It was during that grand tour that Froome realized he had the quiver of skills to challenge across three-week races—that he could climb, time trial, and recover well enough to go the distance.

“I had always hoped to ride GC, but it wasn’t until that Vuelta that I knew I could do it,” Froome says. “My job was to be the last man pulling for Bradley, and the group was only four or five guys left, and I was still feeling quite okay. I realized, ‘hold on, I can actually race GC.’”


Including that Vuelta, Froome has won or taken second in every grand tour he’s finished. He will continue to see the powerful backing from Team Sky and its \$35 million budget, with tremendous support from trainers, coaches, and nutritionists. And where Wiggins tended to be a disruptive presence on the team bus, Froome is a generous captain who leads by example and keeps the mood light.

“Froomey is always joking around,” says Thomas. “We also see how hard he works, and how tough he is. We’ll give everything for Froomey when it counts.”

Add it all up, and Froome clearly has the talent and support to stay on top for years. And at 30, he is just hitting his physical peak.

“I do feel that I am a very different rider than I was in 2013,” he says. “I feel I know my body better, and that helps me to fight through the difficult moments. And that gives me more confidence.”

Since World War II, each decade has seen one rider more or less dominate the Tour: Jacques Anquetil in the 1960s, Eddy Merckx in the 1970s, Bernard Hinault in the 1980s. Miguel Indurain and Lance Armstrong book-ended the EPO era with their runs in the 1990s and 2000s, while Contador’s bid to emerge as the new dominator was stymied by his clenbuterol case.

And now it seems increasingly likely that the 2010s will be remembered as the Froome years. 



TEKLEHAIMANOT

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

Hours after the grandstands came down on the Champs-Élysées, MTN-Qhubeka’s Daniel Teklehaimanot and Merhawi Kudus boarded a flight home to Eritrea, where the nation’s president and a ticker-tape parade were waiting.

“A new continent is coming to cycling,” says MTN-Qhubeka sport director Jens Zemke. “There is a story about riders coming out of townships to the Tour. It’s an amazing story for these boys.”

From Kenyan-born Chris Froome’s win to South African firm Dimension Data’s revolutionary real-time data on every rider to MTN-Qhubeka becoming the first African team in the Tour, this year was a watershed moment for African cycling. The highlight, though, was undoubtedly Teklehaimanot pulling on the polka-dot jersey as an early leader of the climbing competition—the first black African to wear any leader’s jersey in the Tour de France.

“The idea behind this team is that Africa has produced the best long-distance runners in the world, so why not in cycling?” says team founder Douglas Ryder. “It’s only a matter of getting them on bikes, getting them racing.”

The gulf between Froome—the son of British parents who was raised in relative affluence and educated in private boarding schools—and those from East Africa is wider than the Great Rift Valley.

When Teklehaimanot showed up to the Orica-GreenEdge training camp in 2012, he arrived with a backpack, a toothbrush, and underwear. Team staffers asked him, “where’s your stuff?” He replied, “This is it.” This year, he and Kudus needed special visas just to compete in France.

“We are proud of what we are doing here at this Tour,” says Kudus, 21, who was the youngest rider in the peloton. “Just being here is the first step. Maybe someday an African will be winning. I hope so.”

Several programs are already taking root. Jock Boyer has done tremendous work in Rwanda. The UCI’s regional cycling center in South Africa develops provincial talent, and the very best are flown to Europe to ride at the UCI’s World Cycling Center in Aigle, Switzerland, where both Kudus and Teklehaimanot got their start.

There are many obstacles, including a lack of infrastructure and virtually no cycling culture. This isn’t Spain’s Basque Country or Italy’s Tuscany, where the sport is part of the fabric of life.

But bike racing is mostly about physiology, and many are hopeful that once East Africans learn the basic skills of racing, they will come to dominate the peloton.

“We have the potential to develop a rising star from Africa who is capable of fighting for the GC,” Zemke says. “Look at Australia. It took them 10 to 15 years to deliver Cadel Evans, so we are on a similar project in Africa. We have such huge potential in Africa, with the marathon runners, with their physiology. I believe the future belongs to Africa.” — A.H.

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Under the rainbow

For a week in September, Richmond will play host to one of the most important races on the calendar

BY NEAL ROGERS





SPY GAMES

Team USA members took to the streets of Richmond in October 2014 to get an early look at the road course.

THE FACES ARE FAMILIAR, as are the bikes. But everything else about worlds seems off. In place of trade-team kits are national colors. Instead of regular teammates we'll see frequent rivals asked to ride together based on nationality—Kittels and Greipels and Degenkolbs all on the same team. And instead of iconic climbs and familiar roads, there is a one-off course—this year in a place few of the riders have ever visited.

It's the world road championships, the annual late-season ritual that unites riders by nationality, rather than trade team, to determine the best in road cycling on one day in September. For the pros, it's the pinnacle of the sport. For the espoirs, it can be the gateway to a pro contract. For the juniors, it's an indication of things to come. The venue changes every year, and in 2015 the UCI selected the United States as host, for the first time in 30 years, this time in Richmond, Virginia.

In 2015, the worlds will also serve as a dry run for the 2016 Olympic Games, a final opportunity for every national federation staff to perfect the support of its athletes, both on and off the race course.

Time trials are fairly straightforward, aside from the fact that the opening team events are contested by trade team, rather than nationality. But worlds almost always delivers an unpredictable road race. The combination of new teammates, an unfamiliar course, a ban on race radios, and the struggle between national and trade-team loyalties makes for a wild, wide-open battle.

"There's no race radio. Half the time it's difficult to know actually who's in the front, to know how many riders are in the front," says world time-trial champion Bradley Wiggins, who rode as part of Great Britain's winning squad in Denmark in 2011. "They're not in trade team jerseys, so it's difficult to see who is there—different nations, jerseys. It is certainly unique."

As with any road race, there is tactical strength in numbers at the world championships. Not every country gets to field a maximum nine-rider squad, as the peloton would be too large. So the UCI allocates team size based upon nation ranking. The top 10 nations may start nine riders. Spain, France, Belgium, Italy,



REMATCH

Peter Sagan (Slovakia) and Greg Van Avermaet (Belgium) will both be considered favorites on the technical Richmond course. The Belgian got the better of Sagan on stage 13 of the Tour de France.

Germany, Great Britain, Australia, and, yes, the United States, are traditionally the powerhouse nations to watch, though Poland, Colombia, and Norway have made massive gains over the past few seasons.

A big team is no guarantee of victory, of course. A squad made up of all-star riders with several potential winners—Spain, for example—can be at a disadvantage against a smaller team united around a common cause. This was evidenced most recently in Florence, in 2013, when Rui Costa (Portugal) stood atop the podium, flanked by Joaquim Rodriguez and Alejandro Valverde, both from the powerhouse Spanish team. Costa and Rodriguez were in tears during the podium celebration, for very different reasons, while Valverde, Costa's Movistar teammate, stood stone-faced.

Yet even with all the chaos and unpredictability, rarely does worlds produce an undeserving champion. Last year's winner, Michal Kwiatkowski, launched a powerful, perfectly timed late solo attack, catching the pre-race favorites by surprise and holding them off until the finish to secure Poland's first-ever rainbow jersey.

"Tactically he rode a fantastic race, and he was strong enough to back that up and stay away, so he was a worthy winner," says Australian Simon Gerrans, who finished second to Kwiatkowski. "To be honest with you, I felt like I wanted to cry

when I crossed the finish line. To be so close to the world title and to see it slip away in the final few kilometers... If things had unfolded a little bit differently in the final, I could have been racing for the victory."

A win at worlds can launch a career, as it did last year when Kwiatkowski won at age 24. But it can also cap one off, as in 2009, when Cadel Evans won in Mendrisio, Switzerland, at age 32. A quick glance at the list of other recent champions—Costa, Philippe Gilbert (Belgium), Mark Cavendish (Great Britain), Thor Hushovd (Norway)—produces a snapshot of the type of riders suited to win worlds. They need a critical mix of tactical acumen; power to get over short, steep climbs; and finishing speed. By design, world championship courses reward the true all-around rider.

This year's course, a 16km circuit, delivers a challenging and technical trip through the downtown Richmond area, with two 180-degree turns, a sharp off-camber twist, and three significant climbs in the final five kilometers—the first two, Libby Hill and 23rd Street, covered in cobblestones.

After the final, 300-meter climb up Governor Street, riders face a 680-meter false flat to the finish. In total, the course delivers 339 feet of elevation gain per lap. Elite men will cover the course 16 times, for 259.2km and 5,424 feet on the day. Elite women will cover the course eight

times. Under-23 riders and juniors will race on a modified course that does not include the 23rd Street hill.

In May, following the Amgen Tour of California, Cavendish stopped in Richmond on his way back to Europe, to preview the course.

"There's a lot of 90-degree corners," he told the Richmond Times-Dispatch. "There's going to be a lot of acceleration."

Cavendish found the steep, cobbled climb of Libby Hill less difficult than the Governor Street climb. "The cobbles are more about positioning," he says. "The juniors might find it hard there, but for the professionals, it's not really anything. It's not like riding on a flat road, obviously. Positioning is probably key. But in terms of technical difficulty, they're not that big a deal."

The Richmond course looks ideal for a rider like Greg van Avermaet (Belgium) or John Degenkolb (Germany)—stars of the spring classics who have proven their abilities on hilly, cobbled roads and at distances over 250km. Both also boast the team depth to keep them in position. Because the cobblestone sections aren't long or flat, Ardennes classics specialists like Gerrans, Alejandro Valverde (Spain), Julien Alaphilippe (France), and Dan Martin (Ireland) should also excel. A rider like Peter Sagan is perfectly suited to the Richmond course, but because Slovakia will not field a deep squad, he'll once again be

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forced to battle among stronger nations.

"I think it'll be sort of similar to the classics," says American Alex Howes, who previewed the course with several Team USA riders in October. "Anyone who's doing well in something like Flanders or Liège will do well here. On paper, I think if a guy like [Simon] Gerrans is going as well as he was [in 2014], it's a good race for him. He's probably better in the field than a lot of people, and he's got a good finish."

As for the women's peloton, American Evelyn Stevens, a former winner of La Flèche Wallonne, says she expects the usual suspects to be battling for the rainbow jersey.

"I think it's the same women who are competitive nowadays: Marianne Vos, Lizzie Armitstead, Pauline Ferrand-Prévot, and Elisa Longo-Borghini," Stevens says.

Could Stevens, a threat on punchier courses, be one of those candidates?

"I would like to be," she says. "It's extra motivation. We have the world championships in Richmond as we're leading up to that Olympic year. I couldn't imagine anything better than winning here."

For an American rider, winning on home soil would be a career-defining moment. However, the rainbow jersey is a prize every rider in the sport would treasure. The maillot jaune of the Tour de France may be cycling's most hallowed jersey, but it's only worn for a few weeks in July. The world champ gets to wear the rainbow stripes for a full season, a daily reminder of the rider who took on the best in the world and came out on top.

THE KEY RACES

Men's Elite Road Race

Sunday, September 27

The marquee event of the weeklong world championships, the elite men's race is often as exciting as it is unpredictable. Course designers aim to develop a route that favors neither pure climbers nor pure sprinters but, rather, riders capable of both—sprinters who can climb, climbers who can sprint, or all-rounders who can hold their own in both. A look at the top 10 from any monument of the past few years—Milano-Sanremo, the Tour of Flanders, Amstel Gold—gives a good example of the type of rider that typically excels at worlds. Add in national team strength, and the picture becomes clear.

Alejandro Valverde (Spain) is perhaps the most suited all-rounder never to have worn the rainbow jersey. He's reached the podium six times in his career and finished third in each of the past three years. Valverde will be racing the Vuelta a España leading into worlds, and will surely be in the mix in the finale. Others to watch: John Degenkolb (Germany), Greg Van Avermaet (Belgium), Peter Sagan (Slovakia), Michael Matthews (Australia), Julien Alaphilippe (France), Dan Martin (Ireland).



Women's Elite Road Race

Saturday, September 26

Was last year's race a passing of the torch? French phenom Pauline Ferrand-Prévot, then 22, won the bunch sprint, ending the two-year reign of her Rabo-Liv teammate Marianne Vos (The Netherlands). Vos, 28, has been hampered by injury in 2015, and was forced to sit out the Giro Rosa stage race, which she'd used as preparation prior to both of her world titles. Instead it was her teammate, Anna van der Breggen, taking the overall title in Italy. All three women should be in the mix for victory, along with Lizzie Armitstead (Great Britain), who is arguably the best classics-style one-day racer in women's racing. Italy will rest its hopes on young all-rounder Elisa Longo Borghini and veteran sprinter Giorgia Bronzini, while Team USA will have a triple threat in Evelyn Stevens, a climber, Megan Guarnier, an all-rounder, and Shelly Olds, a sprinter.

Men's Elite Time Trial

Wednesday, September 23

The dynamic will be interesting in the time trial, as several riders who have reached the podium in years past won't be starting. Last year's winner, Bradley Wiggins (Great Britain), has moved on to the track for Rio 2016, while American Taylor Phinney, who placed second in the 2012 world TT championship, has been rehabilitating after a devastating leg injury. Phinney, who previewed the 32.9-mile Richmond course last October, said the rolling course requires both power and pacing. "It's a good course for people

who win time trials, basically," he says. If that's the case, all eyes will be on German Tony Martin, the three-time winner. Others with a shot include Tom Dumoulin (The Netherlands), Fabian Cancellara (Switzerland), and Rohan Dennis (Australia).

Nearly half the turns of the entire route fall within the closing kilometers, the second to last of which is onto the 300-meter-long climb of Governor Street. At the top, riders turn left and face a false flat 680 meters to the finish.

Women's Elite Time Trial

Tuesday, September 22

Over the past decade, no rider has dominated the women's time trial like American Kristin Armstrong, who has twice won the rainbow jersey and twice taken Olympic time trial gold. The 42-year-old retired after the London Games but has returned with an eye on taking an unprecedented third medal in Rio. She qualified for the world championships by winning the national time trial championship in May and will look to use a top result in Richmond as her ticket to the Olympics.

Victory is far from assured for Armstrong. Several strong riders have emerged since her retirement, including 2013 champ Ellen van Dijk (The Netherlands) and 2014 champ Lisa Brennauer (Germany). There are several contenders even within Team USA. Evelyn Stevens took silver in 2012, and bronze in 2014, while Carmen Small took bronze in 2013. Also watch for Linda Villumsen (New Zealand), who has never won the rainbow jersey, but has been on the podium five times in the past six years.

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Team Time Trials

Sunday, September 20

After an 18-year absence, the UCI reintroduced the team time trial in 2012, with a twist—trade teams, rather than national teams, would fight for the title. In the three editions since, three teams have dominated: Etixx-Quick-Step, BMC Racing, and Orica-GreenEdge. Etixx won in 2012 and 2013; BMC took silver in 2012 and won in 2014; Orica took bronze in 2012, and silver in 2013 and 2014. A look at the team time trial at the Tour de France showed that BMC was strongest, just one second ahead of Team Sky; however, Etixx was missing TT specialist Tony Martin, and Orica was missing three riders due to injuries. Whether or not Sky should be considered a threat largely depends on the late-season plans for several of its TT engines, including Chris Froome, Richie Porte, Geraint Thomas, and Vasil Kiryienka. What is certain is that defending champions BMC Racing take the race very seriously, and with the worlds on “home soil”—BMC is Swiss-sponsored, but registered as a U.S. team—the boys in red and black will be gunning for a repeat.

In the women's race, there's only been one winner since the event returned in 2012, and that was Specialized-Lululemon; American Evelyn Stevens and German Trixi Worrack were instrumental in all three victories. That team has since disbanded, with Stevens (and sponsor, Specialized) and Chantal Blaak (The Netherlands) moving to Boels-Dolmans, while Worrack and compatriot Lisa Brennauer arriving at Velocio-SRAM. Could that split open the door for the Rabo-Liv team of Marianne Vos, Pauline Ferrand-Prévo, and Anna van der Breggen? Time will tell, but it's almost certain one of these three powerhouse teams will take top honors. 

U23s: A glimpse into the future

Under-23 Men Road Race

Friday, September 25

Under-23 Men Time Trial

Monday, September 21

The under-23 race is often a predictor of things to come—in more ways than one. WorldTour team managers watch closely, often waving contracts in front of top finishers in the days following the race. National team managers watch closely, looking for clues as to how the elite men's race might develop on the same course, 48 hours later.

In 2013, Slovenia's Matej Mohoric became the first rider in history to win the junior and under-23 men's road race world titles back to back with a magnificent solo victory in Florence. He's now with Cannondale-Garmin, and though he's only 20, he cannot race as a U23—riders are ineligible if they are registered with a UCI WorldTour team. Riders who are members of UCI Continental and Pro Continental teams are eligible to compete at the U23 level.

That doesn't exclude riders who are stagiaires—basically unpaid interns—for WorldTour teams, however. Last year's U23 world road champion, Norway's Sven Erik Bystrøm, rode as a stagiaire for Katusha during the second half of the 2014 season, and joined the squad in 2015. One year earlier, South African Louis Meintjes rode the Vuelta a España for MTN-Qhubeka before taking silver at U23 worlds; because MTN is a Pro Continental team, it was permitted.

A look at the podiums of the past five years gives an indication of how a medal at the U23 world championships has been a predictor of WorldTour success. How many names do you recognize? Here's a hint: This season alone, one has worn the maillot jaune, and another won Milano-Sanremo and Paris-Roubaix.

UCI Road World Championships

MEN'S UNDER-23 ROAD RACE




2010 Geelong, Australia

-  Michael Matthews (AUS)
-  John Degenkolb (GER)
-  Guillaume Boivin (CAN)
-  Taylor Phinney (USA)*




2011 Copenhagen, Denmark

-  Arnaud Démare (FRA)
-  Adrien Petit (FRA)
-  Andrew Fenn (GBR)




2012 Valkenburg, The Netherlands

-  Alexey Lutsenko (KAZ)
-  Bryan Coquard (FRA)
-  Tom Van Asbroeck (BEL)

2013 Florence, Italy

-  Matej Mohoric (SLO)
-  Louis Meintjes (RSA)
-  Sondre Holst Enger (NOR)

2014 Ponferrada, Spain

-  Sven Erik Bystrøm (NOR)
-  Caleb Ewan (AUS)
-  Kristoffer Skjerping (NOR)




UCI Road World Championships

MEN'S UNDER-23 TIME TRIAL




2010 Geelong, Australia

-  Taylor Phinney (USA)
-  Luke Durbridge (AUS)
-  Marcel Kittel (GER)


2011 Copenhagen, Denmark

-  Luke Durbridge (AUS)
-  Rasmus Quaade (DEN)
-  Michael Hepburn (AUS)

2012 Valkenburg, The Netherlands

-  Anton Vorobyev (RUS)
-  Rohan Dennis (AUS)
-  Damien Howson (AUS)

2013 Florence, Italy

-  Damien Howson (AUS)
-  Yoann Paillot (FRA)
-  Lasse Norman Hansen (DEN)

2014 Ponferrada, Spain

-  Campbell Flakemore (AUS)
-  Ryan Mullen (IRL)
-  Stefan Küng (SUI)

* Boivin and Phinney finished in a dead heat and each received a bronze medal.

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The battle before the war



UNITED
Members of Team USA
climb Libby Hill in Richmond.

For the first time in nearly 30 years, Americans will have home-field advantage at worlds. The fight to make the squad will be intense. BY CALEY FRETZ

IN BOTH SENSES OF THE WORD, “making” the American team for the first world road championships on American soil since 1986 will not be easy.

Riders will have a hard time getting selected, and the USA Cycling coaches tasked with assembling the team have far more riders than team slots, but too few suited to the tricky roads in Richmond. They face a course that mixes the cobbled climbs typical of a spring classic with the tight corners of an American criterium. It's not a route for the climbers, but not a pure sprinter's course, either.

“It's similar almost to a Flemish classic, with some short, steep power climbs, even some cobblestones—that's kind of my thing,” says Tyler Farrar, who has won stages in all three grand tours and is likely America's best rider for this type of route. “It's exciting to have the worlds in America, in the first place, and, personally, the course is also exciting for me.”

Alex Howes, a former teammate of Farrar's, agrees. “I think Farrar could potentially get to the end here,” Howes says. “And if he does, he's going to be pretty quick. He could be a serious contender for this course. And we have a lot of guys who can help him.”

The long list of American worker bees includes plenty of riders who, while not favorites, could be dangerous if they managed to get into a breakaway. Howes, Nathan Brown, Andrew Talansky, Ben King, and Joe Dombrowski of Cannondale-Garmin; Brent Bookwalter and Tejay van Garderen of BMC Racing; Chad Haga, Caleb Fairly, and Lawson Craddock of Giant-Alpecin; Ian Boswell and Danny Pate of Team Sky; and reigning U.S. champion Matthew Busche of Trek Factory Racing are among the 20 WorldTour contracted American men who will duke it out for just six spots.

The U.S. was close to earning a full complement of nine riders for its home worlds, but needed to be in the top 10 of the UCI's WorldTour Nations ranking on August 15. When van Garderen exited the Tour de France due to illness, it made cracking that threshold mathematically impossible. The host nation will have to make do with six.

Based on their performances this season and their strengths in one-day races, Farrar, Howes, UnitedHealthcare's Kiel Reijnen, and perhaps Talansky are good bets for the final worlds squad. Filling out the team will prove tricky, though.

“Worlds selections are always difficult, regardless of discipline or location,” says Jim Miller, USA Cycling's director of athletics and the man who will make the final selection. “Given they are in the U.S., everyone wants to be part of the team.”

According to Farrar, selection will hinge on late-season form. “The season's long, and you've gotta see who is doing what in the lead up to worlds,” he says. “You can have a long list of a lot of guys this time of year, but it's really about who's healthy, who's had the right race program, that kind of thing.”

As is common among riders targeting worlds, Farrar—who raced the Tour de France—is racing the Vuelta a España with an eye toward bringing grand tour fitness to worlds.

Talansky, coming off a tough Tour de France campaign, is also likely to use the Vuelta to retune the engine before Richmond. The road course is not one particularly suited to his strengths, but he has his eye on both superdomestic duties and a crack at the individual time trial.

“I would like to do the road race and the time trial,” he says. “Being in the U.S., it's obviously special.”

If a rider can jump into the top 10 in the time trial, as Talansky believes he can, the U.S. will gain a second slot at the Rio Olympics in that event. The same goes for the road race; a good result in Richmond equates to a bigger team in Rio.

Miller and his team of coaches have discussed tactics for the men's road race, but are keeping their cards close to the chest.

“We have an idea on how we want to race Richmond, now it's a matter of seeing how guys made it through the Tour,” Miller says. Riders must be willing to suffer over a difficult 260km, too. That makes motivation as important as form.



TYLER FARRAR

End of apathy

The United States hasn't had a world champion in the elite men's road race since Lance Armstrong's win in 1992. Through most of the Armstrong era, worlds was very much secondary to the Tour, despite the solid crop of potential worlds winners with American passports.

“I think that for that whole previous generation, the season just ended after the Tour for those guys,” Farrar says.

That indifference has been erased, and not just because worlds has returned to the U.S. for the first time in 29 years. Changes to the race calendar—including the addition of a number of major races in North America after the Tour—and the fact that a revamped junior and under-23 development program is finally bearing fruit have increased the Americans' interest in worlds, and their chances.

“With the growth of races like [Tour of] Utah and [USA Pro Challenge] and [Tour of] Alberta, there's a big later season, a North American contingent of races, that keeps guys going later in the year,” Farrar says. “I think this younger generation came up through the U.S. national team program—at least the vast majority of us did—and I think that built a different mentality into our generation and the generation underneath me. You know that national team events are important, and the world championships are something to be prioritized.”



'86 Worlds

The last time America's best had home-field advantage



CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Davis Phinney and Greg LeMond at the start, layered up against a damp September chill in Colorado Springs.

IN 1986, JUST AS GREG LEMON, Andy Hampsten, Davis Phinney, and their fellow countrymen were solidifying the U.S. as a presence in the European peloton, Colorado Springs played host to the first UCI World Road Championships in the United States.

As with any worlds, the start list was a who's who: Bernard Hinault, Laurent Fignon, Francesco Moser, Sean Kelly, Steve Bauer, Joop Zoetemelk. But all eyes were on LeMond, who had won the Tour de France just two months earlier. A Tour winner and former world champ racing on home soil: The stage was set.

Only LeMond said it wasn't set for him; the course was too easy to force a selection. But he had ideas about who might win. And his predictions turned out to be spot on. We'll pick it up here with the September 26, 1986, issue of *VeloNews*:

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO — In a room no bigger than the average bedroom, 125 reporters and cameramen gathered to hear Greg LeMond, Tour de France Winner, give his assessment of the world professional road championship, just 48 hours away.

"If I had to pick my favorites, it would be Argentin, Hinault, Van Der Poel, Kelly, and Anderson," he said. "Argentin won't get dropped, and he has the best sprint."

And on the U.S. team? "Ron Kiefel has a good chance."

Did he care to do a little soothsaying on his own chances?

"I hate to say it, but I don't place myself as a favorite."

In the end, LeMond was right on all counts. Kiefel forced what turned out to be the winning break. And when Italy's Moreno Argentin burst out of it four and a half laps later, only Frenchman Charly Mottet could follow. Argentin dropped him on the uphill finish and rolled across the line alone.

Behind them, LeMond took fifth in the bunch sprint to finish seventh overall, the best showing by an American man.

Not all U.S. riders wasted their home-field advantage. In the women's race, American Janelle Parks took a surprise silver behind France's Jeannie Longo.



BOBKE!

Bob Roll: same smile, more hair (above left).

ON THE ATTACK

Ron Kiefel (above right), here leading Spaniard Celestino Prieto, initiated what turned out to be the winning move before falling back to the pack and finishing 79th.

AMERICAN HERO

Phinney (left) finished in the bunch, nine seconds behind the winner, 42nd overall.





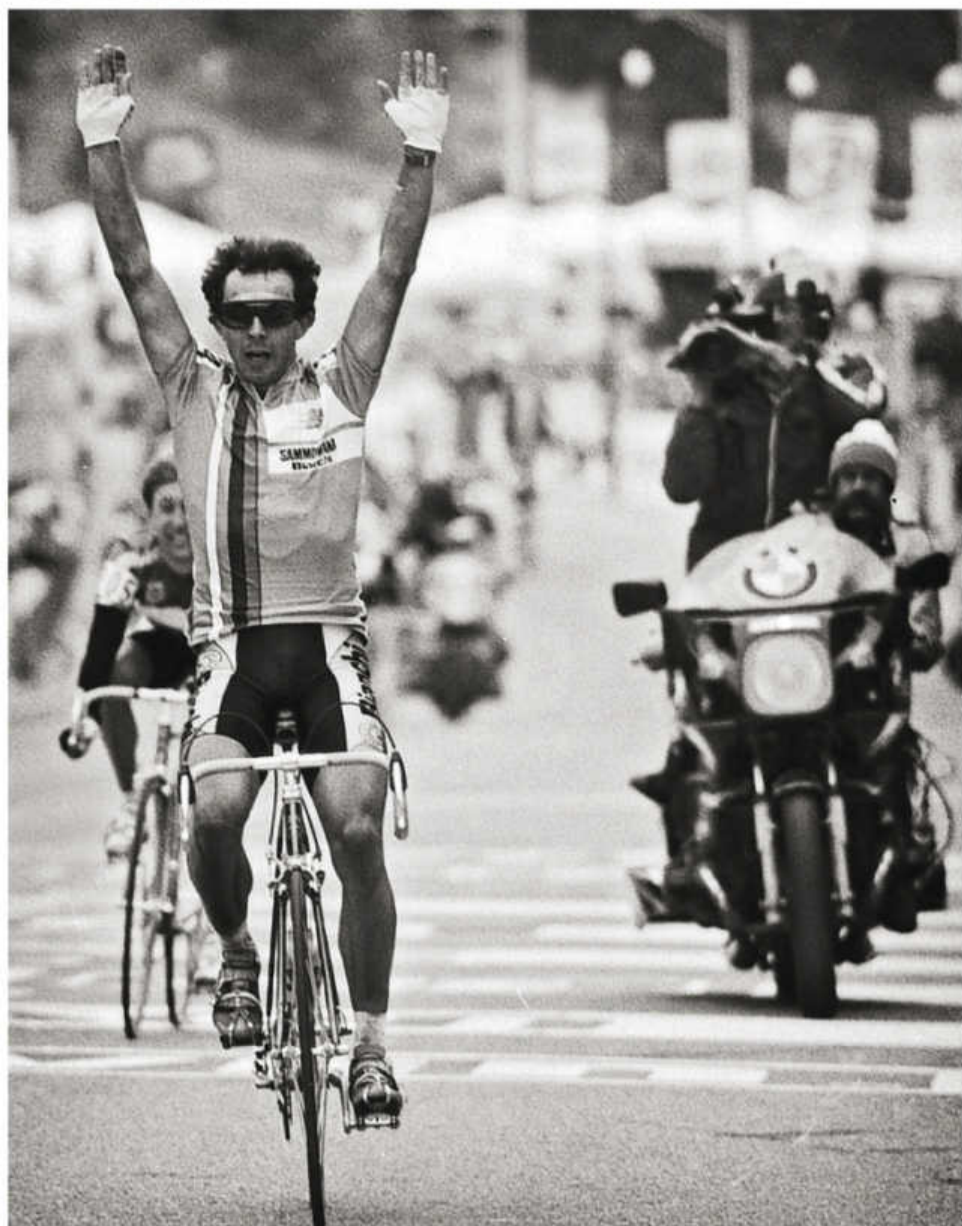
DOUBLE DOWN

In 1986, the Levi's team arranged a deal with the UCI that allowed "minor racing countries" such as the U.S. to have its riders race for one team in Europe and another in the States. Andy Hampsten (above) rode with La Vie Claire in Europe and Levi's in the U.S. His American teammates Roy Knickman and Thurlow Rogers did the same.

THE BADGER

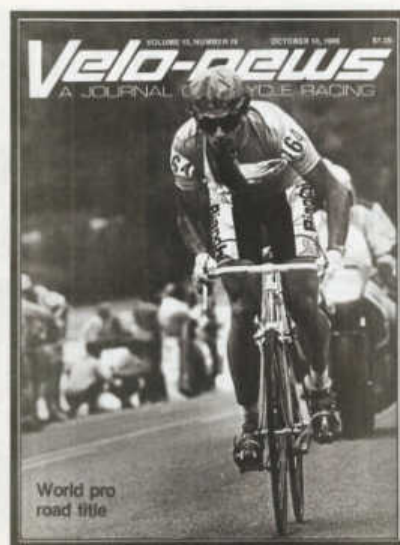
Bernard Hinault came to Colorado Springs fresh off a dominating victory at the Coors Classic—the last stage race win of his career—but could manage only 59th in his final world championships.





CHAMPIONS

Clockwise from left: Moreno Argentin had been knocking on the door at worlds for a while and followed up his second-place in 1985 with the victory in 1986. Consecutive covers of *VeloNews* celebrated Argentin's win and American Janelle Parks' surprise silver in the women's race. Jeannie Longo's win was the second of what would be five world road race championships for the French legend.





ENDURANCE ATHLETES USE CONTROVERSIAL METHOD TO BOOST PERFORMANCE // IS IT LEGAL?

BY MARK HANSEN

Ask endurance athletes about the three most controversial letters in sport and they will tell you: EPO. However, thanks to recent advances in sports nutrition, the discord surrounding EPO is now over. A company has produced a legal solution to the EPO problem.

EPO stands for Erythropoietin, a hormone that gives blood a greater capacity for carrying oxygen. Doctors first used EPO to counter red blood cell loss that resulted from chemotherapy treatment in cancer patients.

When synthetic EPO became available several decades ago, endurance athletes, especially cyclists, started using EPO to gain an advantage during training and races. The reason was simple: with more oxygen being delivered to muscles, performance and endurance improved dramatically.

In the mid-1980s, almost all of the governing bodies in sports banned EPO. Unfortunately, endurance athletes in several sports worked to get around these restrictions by using other blood doping techniques to mask EPO use.

The use of synthetic EPO has been extremely controversial. Several star endurance athletes have admitted using synthetic EPO and have faced severe consequences. The subject of EPO use has also gained significant media attention in the last 10 years.

Fortunately, there's a new legal way for cyclists and other endurance athletes to benefit from boosting EPO production. A company called Biomedical Research Laboratories has developed a natural EPO stimulator specifically for athletes seeking to gain an edge.

The product is called EPO-BOOST®. Taken daily, the ingredients in EPO-BOOST® help the body naturally boost circulating EPO levels. With a boost in EPO levels, more oxygen can reach working muscles resulting in dramatic improvements in athletic performance.

The science behind EPO-BOOST® is equally compelling. Dr. M.T. Whitehead from the Department of Health and Human Performance at Northwestern State University conducted a 28-day double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial to test the effectiveness of the key ingredient EPO-BOOST®.

The research showed that the active ingredient in EPO-BOOST® increased EPO production by over 90% compared to the group taking the placebo.¹ The supplement group showed significant improvements in athletic performance as measured by VO2max and running economy.

EPO-BOOST® is not a miracle pill and it won't make you a world champion overnight. In fact, most users will see that it takes 3-4 weeks to obtain the full performance benefits of EPO-BOOST®. Athletes who use EPO-BOOST® are sharing their results.

Joe Barr, who finished second in his category in the 2014 Race Across America (RAAM), used EPO-BOOST in his preparation for the race. Joe stated, "Since using EPO-BOOST I have finished top 5 in every World Ultra Marathon race I've entered. I've increased my VO2max and my hematocrit levels have increased from 43 to 47. In short, EPO-BOOST is the best supplement on the planet today."

Joey Mesa, a 2013 USA Cycling Masters Champion, stated, "I started using EPO-BOOST this racing season and can really tell a difference. I'm feeling consistently great in all my races and the ability to keep going hard attack after attack is awesome! I've been racing bikes for over 30 years and tried lots of nutritional products, EPO-BOOST just plain works!"

So EPO-BOOST® provides a total solution for athletes in all sports looking for improved energy, endurance, and recovery. EPO-BOOST® is legal for competition. All ingredients in EPO-BOOST® are in compliance with WADA, UCI, IOC, and NCAA rules. Each batch of EPO-BOOST® is certified to be free of banned substances by the Banned Substances Control Group (BSCG) in Los Angeles.

Biomedical Research Laboratories offers a strong guarantee to back the product. Athletes can use EPO-BOOST® for a full 90 days. If the athlete is not fully satisfied in those 90 days, the athlete receives a prompt refund.

A company spokesman confirmed a special offer. If you order this month, you'll receive Free Enrollment into the company's "Elite Athlete Club" where you'll qualify to receive a full 25% discount on all bottles of EPO-BOOST®. And so you always have EPO-BOOST® in your system to increase your endurance, you'll automatically receive a fresh bottle every 30 days. There are no minimum amounts of bottles to buy and you can cancel at any time. You can order EPO-BOOST® today at www.EPOBOOST.com or by calling 1-800-780-4331.

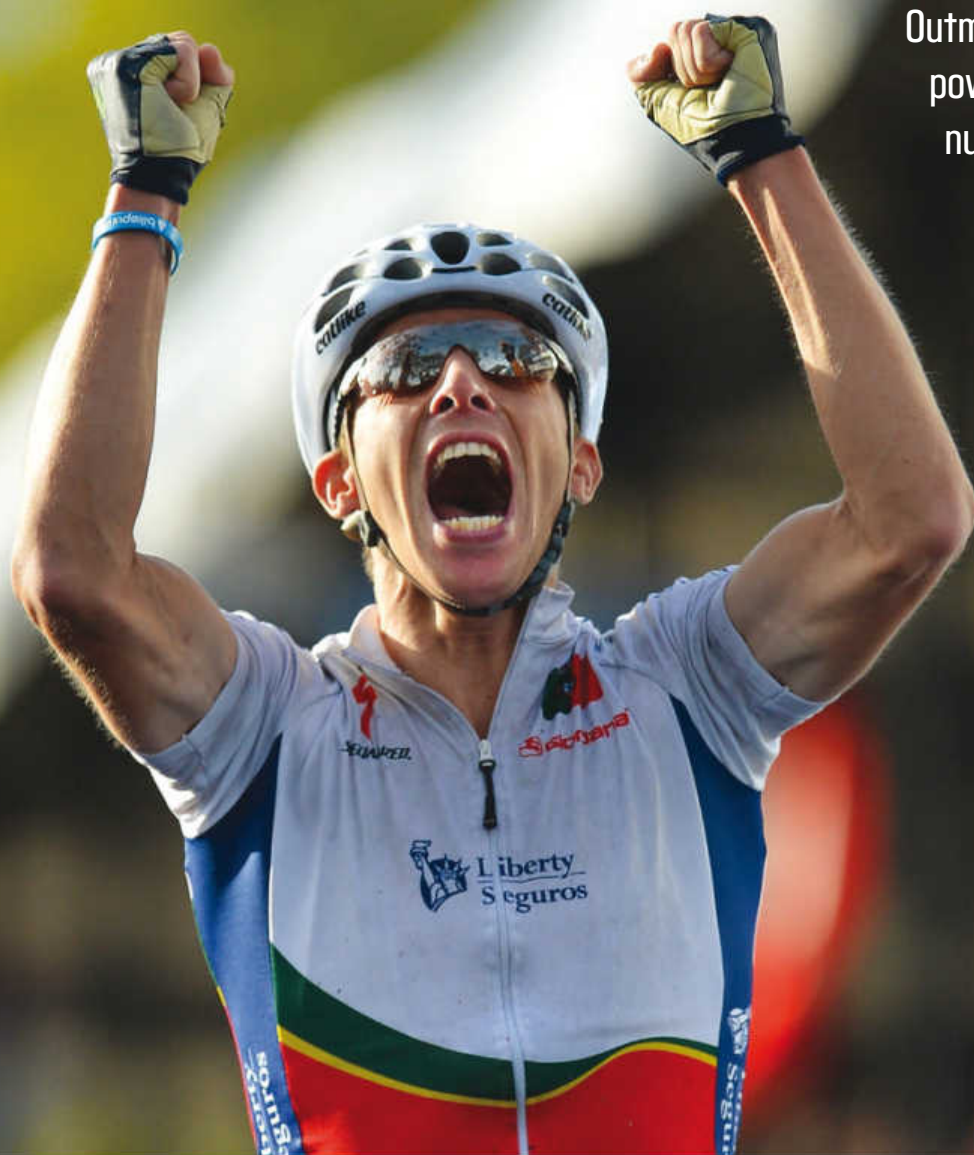
¹ Whitehead et al. Int J Sport Nutr Exerc Metab, 17 (2007): 378-9.



Mice that roar

Outmanned by cycling's superpowers, squads with smaller numbers could still yield big results in Richmond

BY RYAN NEWILL



UNDERDOG

Rui Costa, on a three-man team from Portugal, outsmarted the field to take the world title in Florence in 2013.

IN CYCLING, THE PLAYING FIELD is never level. Flat or mountainous, short or long, relentlessly twisting or arrow-straight, the sport's ever-changing stadia always play favorites among riders.

But at the very least, cyclists begin each race with nominally identical resources: the same number of riders on a team, the same number of cars in the caravan, the same access to nutritional support and technical assistance. Except, that is, in pursuit of the sport's premier title—an elite world road race championship.

At worlds, national squads can have as many

as nine riders or as few as just one. Unfair, perhaps, but for a truly global sport, it is a concession necessary to ensure inclusiveness while maintaining competitive integrity and a manageable field size of 200 riders.

The UCI adjusts the team allocation formula each year, but the basics remain the same. The top 10 nations in the WorldTour rankings get the maximum nine starting positions. Below them, team sizes are determined by the number of riders a country has in the individual WorldTour rankings. So a nation with seven ranked riders will field a team of seven. Finally,

countries with no WorldTour-ranked riders can qualify with smaller team sizes through results on the five UCI continental calendars.

The formula ensures a global race but heavily favors the European calendar and the traditional cycling powers of Italy, France, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, which are all but assured the maximum team size each year. Behind them, a host of countries, including Australia, Colombia, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Russia, and the United States, vie for the remaining nine-rider allotments. Smaller countries (in terms of elite pro cycling

TIM DE WAELE



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ALONE
Edvald Boasson Hagen is surrounded by Italians, Belgians, Germans, and Brits at Ponferrada worlds in 2014.

representation) then fight for the scraps.

For the riders on the smaller squads, the odds can appear insurmountable. Fielding fewer riders leaves fewer tactical options, fewer chances of getting a wheel from a teammate, and fewer reserves as attrition takes its toll. But in cycling, which values guile, economy, and resourcefulness almost as highly as speed and strength, numerical superiority does not always prevail.

In 2000, little known third-year pro Romans Vainsteins of Latvia, riding with only two teammates, surfed his way into a star-studded selection in Plouay, France. As the 25-strong group fought to pull back Belgian Andre Tchmil's red-kite attack, Vainsteins came to the front and timed his sprint perfectly. He accelerated in Tchmil's wake, leaving behind more lauded contenders like Italian Michele Bartoli and Spaniard Oscar Freire, and slipped on his rain-bow jersey to murmurs of "Who?"

Ten years later, far less obscure Thor Hushovd of Norway won a world title in Geelong, Australia, in much the same manner. One-third of the Norwegian contingent, alongside Alexander Kristoff and Edvald Boasson Hagen, Hushovd survived the final circuit's two climbs in the select front group, relying on larger teams and the finale's wide, straight roadways to neutralize attacks. He calmly waited out late moves from Belgian Philippe Gilbert and Dutchman Niki Terpstra before sprinting to

the biggest result of his career.

Another rider on a three-man team triumphed in 2013. On a far more selective course in Florence, Italy, Rui Costa won by way of heads-up riding. With one lap of the climber-friendly circuit remaining, Costa joined Rigoberto Urán and Alejandro Valverde to bridge to leaders Joaquim Rodríguez and Vincenzo Nibali. Costa had discerningly sniffed out a move that not only had strong riders, but which also took three of the race's biggest teams—Spain, Italy, and Colombia—out of the chase. With the break's success assured, Costa could go man-to-man with his competitors, chasing down Rodríguez's late attack and outsprinting the Spaniard for the win.

TURN, TURN, TURN

Richmond's worlds course doesn't have climbs difficult enough to force a selection like Costa saw in Florence. At first glance, the profile would appear to favor big teams controlling the race for a star sprinter—Germany for André Greipel or Marcel Kittel, for example, or Great Britain for Mark Cavendish. The overhead view tells a different story, however, revealing the urban course's 25 turns per lap. And these are no gentle bends; U-turns punctuate either end of the course, and 20 of the turns in between are a full 90 degrees. Over 16 laps, that means some 400 slowdowns and accelerations, with

all the corner dives and accordion effects that come with them.

Combined with small, disruptive climbs and several sections of cobblestones, the Richmond course will work against large squads' ability to control the race, as riders seize every drop in pace as an opportunity to advance. Attackers will find it easier to stay out of sight, and with all three climbs and plenty of turns packed into the final five kilometers, a well-timed late move could leave even the most powerful teams without enough room to regroup.

SMALL TEAMS, BIG RIDERS

Who might follow in the footsteps of Vainsteins, Hushovd, and Costa? Of the contenders hailing from outside cycling's superpower nations, one name looms large: Peter Sagan. Though the Slovak champion will likely start with five teammates at best, the combination of talents he brings to the technical course might more than make up for a shortage of men. Still just 25 years old, Sagan has podium finishes at the Ronde van Vlaanderen and Milano-Sanremo to show that he can excel above the 250-kilometer mark. He's also among the best bike handlers in the peloton—a valuable asset in what's sure to be a near-constant battle for position in Richmond. He also excels on short power climbs, and while he packs one of the

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The Critérium du Dauphiné is considered by many to be one of the best indicators of Tour de France success. Raced across many of the same roads it is a test not only for riders but also the equipment. Victory here can be a stepping stone to glory in July. The Cofidis Pro Cycling Team will be conquering those roads aboard the Kenda Kountach Endurance and Kriterium Endurance tires. Dual layer puncture protection and race tuned rubber compounds take the fear of the away, leaving the rest up to you . . .

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LOOMING LARGE

Peter Sagan may be the heaviest favorite for the title in Richmond. Disappointed by a string of near-misses in 2015, he will be hungry to win on a course that suits his aggressive style.



sport's best finishing kicks, he's never required a dedicated leadout and is comfortable freelancing in hectic finishes.

The timing may suit Sagan as well. After a frustrating classics campaign this season, he came around at the Tour of California where he won two stages and the overall, and continued with two stage wins at the Tour de Suisse. Then, he showcased his versatility on his way to a fourth consecutive green jersey at the Tour de France, despite taking a stage victory. Richmond could prove the perfect venue for him to claim his first rainbow stripes since his junior mountain bike title in 2008.

Like Sagan, three-time cyclocross world champion Zdenek Stybar has the right mix of bike-handling skills and power; he might even surpass the young Slovak in tactical nous. Since committing fully to the road in 2012, the Czech has become a mainstay of Etixx-Quick-Step's all-star classics squad, and this season has shown he's still on the rise. He began with a hard-fought win in the hilly Italian neo-classic Strade Bianche and followed that up with a close second at Roubaix. Those performances paved the way for his Tour de France debut, where he put in a well-timed attack on La Havre's uphill finish to win stage 6. (Sagan, incidentally, was second.)

Another thing in Stybar's favor: As of late June, the Czech Republic ranked 11th among

nations, perched on the cusp of earning a nine-man worlds squad.

Unlike the Czechs, the Norwegians cannot dream of a full team. Last year they again fielded just three riders. But Alexander Kristoff could still leave his mark in Richmond. The Katusha strongman took the 2015 cobbled classics season by storm, winning three out of four stages and the overall at the Three Days of De Panne before claiming his second monument at the Tour of Flanders and following up with a Scheldeprijs win three days later.

Since then, he's captured stages in home-country races Tour des Fjords and Tour of Norway as well as a stage of the Tour de Suisse. He proved fairly anonymous in the Tour de France's scarce bunch sprints, but his 2014 Sanremo and 2015 Ronde trophies show his real strength lies in sprints at the end of long, hard races. If a small group comes to the line in Richmond, as it did for Hushovd in Geelong, Kristoff could deliver Norway its second title in five years.

While Sagan, Stybar, and Kristoff will each be looking to cap off successful seasons in Richmond, Fabian Cancellara will be looking to salvage his. The week before he was to defend his 2014 Tour of Flanders title, Cancellara was involved in a massive crash just 40 kilometers into the E3 Harelbeke, cracking two vertebrae and ending his spring campaign. Still, he came back strong for the Tour and managed to

grab the yellow jersey in stage 2. But a pileup the following day brought a familiar pain and X-rays—two broken vertebrae and another season goal cut short.

Even for mighty Cancellara, who at 34 now speaks openly of impending retirement, a second comeback in just six months is a tall order. But if anything could motivate him, it is the possibility of a road title to add to his four world time trial championship crowns, seven monument victories, and collection of yellow jerseys he has earned in six Tours de France.

Should Cancellara return to strength in time, a win in Richmond is still a longshot. At best, he'll likely have five countrymen for support against opposition who know him well. And the rhythm-sapping twists and turns will not favor the awe-inspiring sustained power that he has used to win countless time trials and ride away from the sport's best in the classics.

But in 14 years as a pro, Cancellara has proven nothing if not versatile. If the man they call Spartacus gets out of sight with 20 kilometers to go, or if he is still near the front when the race enters its final kilometer, with its springboard climb up Governor Street and long false flat to the finish, who could rule him out? For a rider with little else left to prove, a final year spent in stripes could be the perfect sendoff, and a fairytale ending to a nightmare season. **V**

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Unified front



As aero integration has become more sophisticated, the design philosophy has begun to seep into all types of bikes. Here's what you should know about what's out there and how it affects your ride. **BY DAN CAVALLARI**

FOR A WHILE, IT LOOKED LIKE BIKE MANUFACTURERS had spent the past 30 years completely obliterating the idea of the do-it-all road bike. The 1980s saw radical designs for the dedicated time trial bike. And pretty soon, road bikes started splintering into climbing bikes, crit bikes, endurance bikes, and, most recently, aero-road bikes.

Each new sub-category sacrificed some qualities in order to gain others—comfort for stiffness, stiffness for weight, aerodynamics for handling. Things have gotten so specific that not only do pros have different bikes for different races, they often switch within a race. Bike changes before the first sector of cobbles at Paris-Roubaix have been commonplace for years. Alberto Contador caused a stir this year with mid-stage bike swaps at both the Giro and Tour—using one for flat lead-ins on climbing stages and another for when the roads turned up.

So this might sound odd, but the all-around bike is making a comeback. After three decades of chasing individual ride characteristics as far as they could—think Trek's featherweight Emonda or Specialized's cobble-killing Roubaix—bike engineers are reassembling them into unified platforms. These bikes, at their core, are largely based on what we have come to call aero-road.

Two things have allowed this to happen. The first is a big advance in frame design. Early aero-road bikes were notorious for being laterally soft, vertically rigid, and heavy—the exact opposite of what you want in a bike. New designs have fixed this. Weights are flirting with UCI limits, the bikes are laterally stiff enough to get sprinters like Mark Cavendish across the line, and they're figuring out how to make it all comfortable.

"Comfort and aerodynamics are something of an inverse relationship," says Mio Suzuki, an analysis engineer at Trek Bikes. Suzuki is responsible for the computational fluid dynamics (CFD) testing that ultimately led to the redesign of Trek's new Madone. "If we go aero, we need to sacrifice ride quality. So we really needed to nail each area of the bike as much as possible to combine comfort and ride quality."

Bike designers haven't just integrated different ride characteristics. They've integrated everything. This new crop of do-anything aero-road bikes features things like one-piece handlebar-stem combinations, internal routing for cables and wires, and proprietary brakes shrouded within frame tubes.

Depending on whom you ask, integration is either the best way forward or a total mess. When designers don't have to worry about their frames playing nice with components from other manufacturers, they can create total packages that deliver precisely the ride characteristics they want. On the other hand, integration is a nightmare for people who work on their own bikes. (Professional mechanics aren't always big fans, either, but they get paid by the hour, so there's an upside for them.) And the integrated cockpits don't allow for the sorts of position adjustments we're used to.

Still, according to Chris Yu, a Stanford aeronautics Ph.D. who heads up aerodynamics and racing research and development for Specialized, integration is here to stay. And the truth is that, when it comes to racing, aero-road bikes are most people's best bet for the one-bike quiver. "The magnitude of benefit that legitimate aero designs offer is massive, more so than most people expect," Yu says. "For the vast majority of riders and race situations, aero is vastly more important than weight."

Here's what you need to know about where bike design is headed and what you should look for in your next ride.

COCKPIT

A one-piece bar and stem lends a certain aesthetic simplicity to any bike, but there's really nothing simple about it. Combining stiffness, comfort, and aerodynamic performance in a major point of contact between bike and rider, all while keeping the component light enough to be practical, is a tall order for any engineer. Early iterations were too heavy, and many were uncomfortable. New designs have largely moved past these shortcomings with better carbon construction and redesigns based on rider feedback.

"By integrating the handlebar and stem, we eliminated the gap that the traditional handlebar and stem leave," Suzuki says. "Hiding the steering tube that might stick out from [above] the handlebar was important. These are cylinders, which are the worst shapes you can have on a bike, in terms of aerodynamics."



SECRET PASSAGE

Cable routing through the handlebar and stem and directly into the frame eliminates wind exposure.

Adjustability is still a problem, however. The one-piece system means the handlebar position can't be changed. Though most allow for a bit of vertical adjustment using spacers, rotation and fore-aft adjustment aren't possible. The brake hoods can be repositioned, but only so far, given the angles and curves of these bars.

Specialized has taken a stab at correcting this. The company's new Venge ViAS features an integrated system with two bolts running from the faceplate of the stem to the stem itself, through the handlebar. Instead of a one-piece bar-stem, the Venge has an integrated two-piece system that allows for a bit more adjustment while preserving the aerodynamic benefits.

ROUTING

Internal routing has become standard on just about all road bikes. There's certainly something to be said for the uncluttered lines that result, but since cylinders (think cable housing) are horrible in the wind, there's a big aerodynamic upside to hiding them, as well.

Of course, if you've ever worked with internal routing, you know the problem: Running cables from the shifters, through the bars, into the frame, and back out can try your patience. The batteries and junction boxes of electronic shifting have only made things more difficult.

Canyon Bicycles designed its handlebar-stem to house a Di2 junction box underneath, and the battery hangs inside the seat tube. Trek integrated the Di2 junction box into a slot in the down tube and hid the battery inside the down tube.

"We didn't perform that much CFD on cables, but at the wind tunnel we experimented with a variety of cable routing configurations," Suzuki says. "We found a significant reduction in aerodynamic drag if we hid the cables from the front of the bike. Anything you can hide at the front end of the bike is most beneficial."



HIDDEN AGENDAS

Clockwise from top: Look hides the front brake for its TT bike within the fork for a clean look and aero advantage; Trek's front brake is so deeply integrated within the fork that the company had to build small doors—called Vector Wings—that open when the wheel is turned to allow full range of motion; a cutaway shows the down tube internals of the Trek Madone, which houses the Di2 battery and junction box; the Madone package includes an integrated front brake, cockpit, cable routing, Di2 junction box and battery, and IsoSpeed decoupler.

FRAME

Aero frames have a well-earned reputation for being brutally stiff. A Kamm-tail or airfoil design may shave tenths of seconds off your PR, but the flat surfaces and right angles might also compel you to book another massage session to un-kink your back.

Major bike brands are starting to address this with designs that incorporate vertical compliance. Perhaps the most drastic approach comes courtesy of Trek, with its new Madone frame featuring an IsoSpeed decoupler. The rider benefits from vertical compliance for long-term comfort; however, this particular decoupler offers a hidden feat of engineering: within the aero-shaped seat tube is another tube that flexes independently of the frame. The frame stays plenty stiff for jump-forward peppiness, and the seatpost can flex to absorb the bumps. **V**

DAN CAVALLARI (4)

BRAKES

Most mechanics dread bottom bracket-mounted rear brakes, and for good reason: They're a pain to adjust, and the aerodynamic gains are questionable. The wind can see that brake even if the rider can't.

New designs involve proprietary brakes that integrate into frames and fork sections to present a clean surface to the wind. Like aero offerings of the past, however, braking power is still a struggle. Pros who hurl themselves down steep mountain passes have balked at squishy linear-pull brakes.

How do you create a brake that's aerodynamically optimized?

Trek's new front brake design on the Madone features fly-out panels, called Vector Wings, that allow the brake to turn uninhibited; when the handlebars are straight, the wings sit flush with the brake, creating a smooth path for wind.

"We use a center-pull brake to eliminate a side arm and reduce drag," Suzuki says. "And in order to hide the cable and housing, we developed the Vector Wing."



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MINIMALIST MACHINES

Feathery light and flexy in all the right places, the hardtail is alive and well on cross-country courses around the world. Here are four of the best.

BY DAN CAVALLARI | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRAD KAMINSKI

THERE IS STILL A PLACE IN THIS WORLD for the hardtail mountain bike. Manufacturers have realized that a balance between rigidity and comfort is necessary for a well-rounded hardtail—a refreshing change from older generations of bikes that focused almost exclusively on stiffness for that jump-forward snap.

As carbon construction has evolved, builders have been able to utilize layups that placed strength, stiffness, and compliance in different locations. Still, the prevalence of full-suspension bikes on racecourses suggests racers want even more. It's no surprise, then, that two of the bikes in our test feature damping systems that address hardtail compliance specifically. The other two are designed with smart geometry and carbon construction aimed at adding comfort without sacrificing stiffness.

Here's a testament to just how good these bikes are: One of our testers rode the same course with each bike, and set PRs on three of the four rides. That's fast. In the end, there's nothing like a hardtail for its low weight and quick climbing chops, and the simplicity of its maintenance and adjustment.

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The Highball is a very stiff bike. Bottom bracket flex is negligible, which means this is a bike for the final sprint before the finish and the short, punchy climbs where you're likely to make a quick pass. The geometry wasn't entirely to our liking, but if you win races on technical descents or you're a masher who is looking for a tough and light bike, the Highball might be your next ride.

STIFFNESS AND ACCELERATION The Highball produced low deflection numbers in the lab, which came as no surprise given how rigid the bike felt on the trail. Most of the deflection is in the seat tube. This agrees with our trail assessment, as the Highball isn't unduly harsh.

Still, despite the good lab numbers for the bottom bracket, the Highball lacked a bit of pep out on the trail. It didn't leap like we would have expected when we stood on the pedals.

COMFORT AND HANDLING Santa Cruz shortened the chainstays by nearly half an inch and lengthened the front end by the same. This was supposed to result in quicker cornering and better handling up front, without the wandering that's common among 29ers. But the result was that it felt squirrely on the climbs. A bit slacker head tube angle could go a long way toward stabilizing the front end.

In general, Santa Cruz has made a comfortable bike. But if you're looking for the responsiveness that comes from a short top tube, look elsewhere. The Highball feels a touch long, and it doesn't climb especially well. Whether this is the result of the long top tube or the steeper head tube angle that sometimes kept us from attacking the climbs with confidence, is up for debate. Something feels just a bit off.

On the descents the Highball feels much better, carving well in corners and remaining predictably stable even on the steep.

BUILD It's hard to go wrong with a full Shimano XTR group. The Enve wheels, while definitely a price booster, fit well with the build and are great going up or down the mountain. Up front, the Fox 32 Float 29 Factory 100 takes on two-foot drops as easily as it soaks up river-stone rock gardens. Fox has done wonders with this platform for 2015.

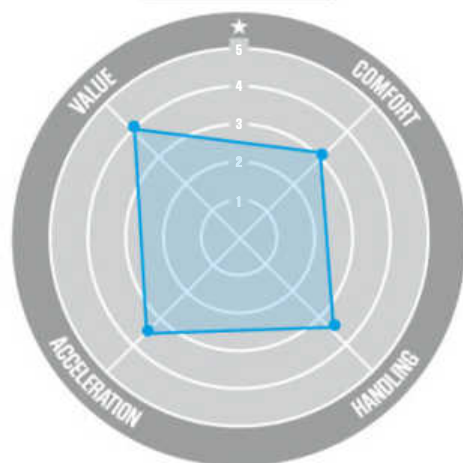
VALUE Without the Enve upgrade, the Highball has a price tag commensurate with its stature and on par with its peers. Do the Enve wheels justify an extra two grand? It depends on whether you're a pro racer on World Cup courses or an amateur fighting for fourth on a Wednesday night short-track race. The wheels are excellent, but downgrading to a pair of aluminum hoops would leave room in your wallet for some pretty swanky accessories.

WE DON'T LIKE

Geometry not ideal for technical climbs

OVERALL SCORES

TORSIONAL STIFFNESS TOTAL
(MEASURED IN MILLIMETERS) **9.88**



Carves corners and remains stable downhill

WE LIKE

Stiff BB for fast sprints



BMC TEAMELITE 01 \$6,600 20.08 lbs Medium ★★★★★

The Teamelite 01 is one of the best-handling hardtails we've ridden in years—lively on climbs and nimble on technical descents.

BMC has addressed the stiffness-to-comfort conundrum with what it calls Micro Travel Technology, or MTT. The system integrates a damper into the seat stays to soak up vibrations while ostensibly maintaining the overall stiffness of the bike. It's a great idea—if not an entirely unique one—but BMC hasn't quite nailed the execution here.

STIFFNESS AND ACCELERATION The bottom bracket area is exceptionally stiff and makes for good snap, particularly on short, steep climbs. The head tube and seat tube, however, flex considerably. Out on the trails, we noticed some wobble in the rear end, mostly due to the MTT system. The bike tracks well and feels responsive out of the saddle, though acceleration isn't astounding.

The MTT system also turned out to be the frame's Achilles heel. It soaks up trail chatter that would otherwise hit the rider's spine, but it sacrifices plenty of stiffness, which doesn't lend itself to out-of-the-saddle confidence.

COMFORT AND HANDLING Fox's 32 Float Factory Series Fit4 fork is about as dialed as an XC fork

can get. Small bump chatter is hardly noticeable even at high speeds, and bigger bumps through rock gardens disappear beneath you. Our only complaint was slippage with the lockout cable.

Three different MTT damper units are included with the bike: soft (I), medium (II), and firm (III). We started with the medium damper, which we found to be far too soft, so we swapped it out for the firmest damper. This helped a bit, but when pedaling slowly a strange vibration resonated through the frame, which we found distracting and uncomfortable.

BUILD SRAM's XX1 drivetrain adorned our test bike, along with Shimano's XTR disc brakes and a BMC carbon bar. The bike rolls on DT Swiss XR 1501 Spline One wheels that complement a reliable and light build. XTR brakes are a nice touch, though we would have been just as happy with XT.

VALUE At \$6,600 for a full carbon frame with a slew of reliable and light components, the BMC is right where it should be on price. We're not sold on the MTT, though, and would consider downgrading to the Teamelite02, which has a good spec on a full carbon frame, minus the damper unit.

WE DON'T LIKE

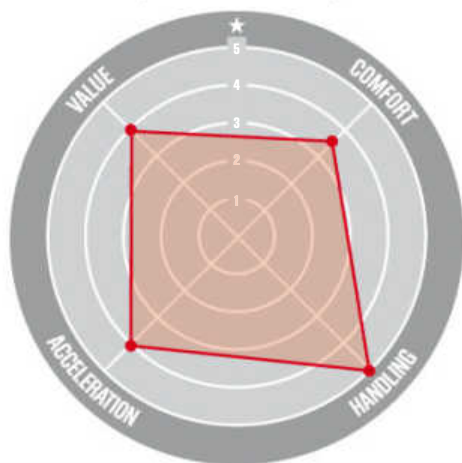
Damping system caused unpleasant ride feel

WE LIKE

Excellent handling; great fork

OVERALL SCORES

TORSIONAL STIFFNESS TOTAL
(MEASURED IN MILLIMETERS) **12.67**



One of the best-handling hardtails we've ridden



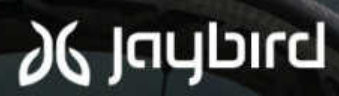
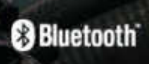
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CANNONDALE F-SI CARBON 1

\$6,400

21.43 lbs

Medium

★★★★★

Cannondale has rolled out some smart designs recently to make trail rides faster and more fun. The F-Si is spec'd with the new Lefty 2.0 Carbon XLR 100 fork, which replaces previous models with an open bath damping system that's said to be stiffer and more responsive.

The Asymmetric Integration Drivetrain allows for better tire clearance and doesn't affect the Q-factor, which is a nice touch on a race bike we'd love to spend more time on. It's perfect for sprint- and climb-heavy courses though probably shouldn't be anyone's first choice for rock gardens and technical descents.

STIFFNESS AND ACCELERATION The F-Si performed very well in our torsional stiffness test, but that didn't translate into harshness out on the trail—at least not in the rear end of the bike. Attribute that compliance to tapered tube shapes and the Save 2 seatpost, which drastically deflects without bouncing the rider around. Considering how comfortable this bike is despite almost no deflection in the bottom bracket area, the seatpost seems to be doing its job.

Up front, the Lefty 2.0 fork is a bit difficult to fine-tune; it feels very rigid on chatterty descents and through sustained rock gardens. It tracks well, though, especially at low speeds and in tight turns. The Lefty is stiff, too, thanks to its single-leg construction and dual-crown design.

Cannondale's new damping system stiffens the fork even further—perhaps a bit too far. It makes for an unforgiving front end.

COMFORT AND HANDLING Exceptionally short 429mm chainstays make the F-Si very flickable. Our testers found themselves whipping through technical sections a little faster than usual. The 69.5-degree head angle is slack for a cross-country bike, but the handling is nimble and quick.

The Cannondale is very harsh at the front, but for serious racers, the advantages of stiffness at that end—excellent tracking and power out of the saddle—outweigh the disadvantages.

BUILD The Carbon 1 comes dressed in a mix of XT and XTR drivetrain components and a Cannondale HollowGram Si crank. The 2X11 drivetrain seems unnecessary, even on steep and sustained climbs; if this was our bike, we'd go 1X. It wouldn't hurt to de-clutter the left side of the handlebar where the brake, shifter, and fork-lockout lever were all crammed.

VALUE There's a lot of smart engineering packed into the F-Si, from the fork to the frame. The mix of XT and XTR drivetrain components works well and fits the caliber of bike, though if you're looking for something cheaper, check out the Carbon 2, decked out with SRAM X01, an alloy Lefty XLR, and Stan's ZTR Arch EX wheels.



WE DON'T LIKE

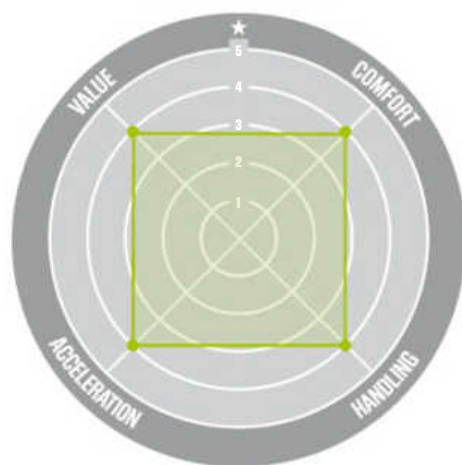
Lefty fork is a bit too stiff

WE LIKE

Short, snappy chain stays

OVERALL SCORES

TORSIONAL STIFFNESS TOTAL
(MEASURED IN MILLIMETERS) 9.63



Smart engineering makes for a flickable ride



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LEZYNE
Engineered Design

TREK PRO CALIBER 9.9 \$8,400 19.4 lbs Medium ★★★★★

This bike is a head turner. A lot of that is down to the striking RockShox RS-1. And the IsoSpeed decoupler, adopted from Trek's road and 'cross-bikes, is not something people are used to seeing on a mountain bike. This iteration is a burlier design for off-road use, but the goal is the same—letting the seat tube flex independently of the top tube for a smooth ride that doesn't sacrifice lateral stiffness.

Bottom line: The Pro Caliber 9.9 can race with the best of them without destroying your lower back, and can even handle technical singletrack that would bounce other hardtails off the trail.

STIFFNESS AND ACCELERATION The Pro Caliber features a 148mm rear hub designed for better stiffness and handling. While we weren't immediately blown away by the hub, the Pro Caliber certainly handles well in tight singletrack and rewards aggressive lines through corners.

Still, aside from the bottom bracket, which is about as stiff as they come, this is not an exceptionally rigid frame. There's plenty of deflection in the seat and head tubes. Given the rock-solid BB, the seat tube flex seems inconsequential. And the front-end flex seems to be due mainly to the RS-1.

It might seem like a weird mix, but it all comes together for a very precise and comfortable ride.

COMFORT AND HANDLING The Pro Caliber 9.9 really hits its stride here. Overall handling is exceptional on almost all trail conditions. The IsoSpeed decoupler isn't so noticeable when you're riding, but after several hours you'll realize your back doesn't hurt. We approve of the technology, even if it offers an occasional creak.

We had reservations about the RockShox RS-1, but paired with SRAM's predictive steering hub system, the fork tracks well, even in tight switchbacks. It feels a little stiff on the top end of the stroke and a touch squishy at the bottom. The lockout is not particularly impressive either, with a bit of slop when fully locked. It's a so-so fork but at a high-end price.

BUILD The RS-1 just wasn't good enough to justify the additional cost, and the associated pain of taking the front wheel on and off was the deal breaker. It would be on our short list to swap to something more reliable and less expensive.

Deep-dish DT Swiss wheels complemented the BB stiffness on climbs and held their own in high-speed corners, though we would consider downgrading if cost is a factor. An XTR drivetrain and brakes top off an excellent build.

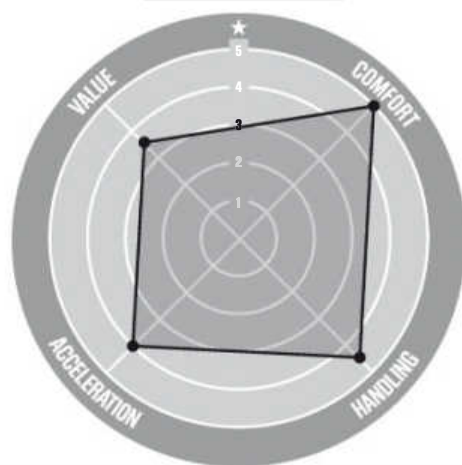
VALUE This is a racer's bike, though a bit overpriced. But with some strategic downgrades—the fork, for example—the Pro Caliber could get into reasonable territory, especially given the ride quality of the frame.

WE LIKE
IsoSpeed decoupler works as advertised

WE DON'T LIKE
RS-1 fork is expensive and inconsistent

OVERALL SCORES

TORSIONAL STIFFNESS TOTAL
(MEASURED IN MILLIMETERS) **11.94**



A light and fast XC racer that won't leave your back aching

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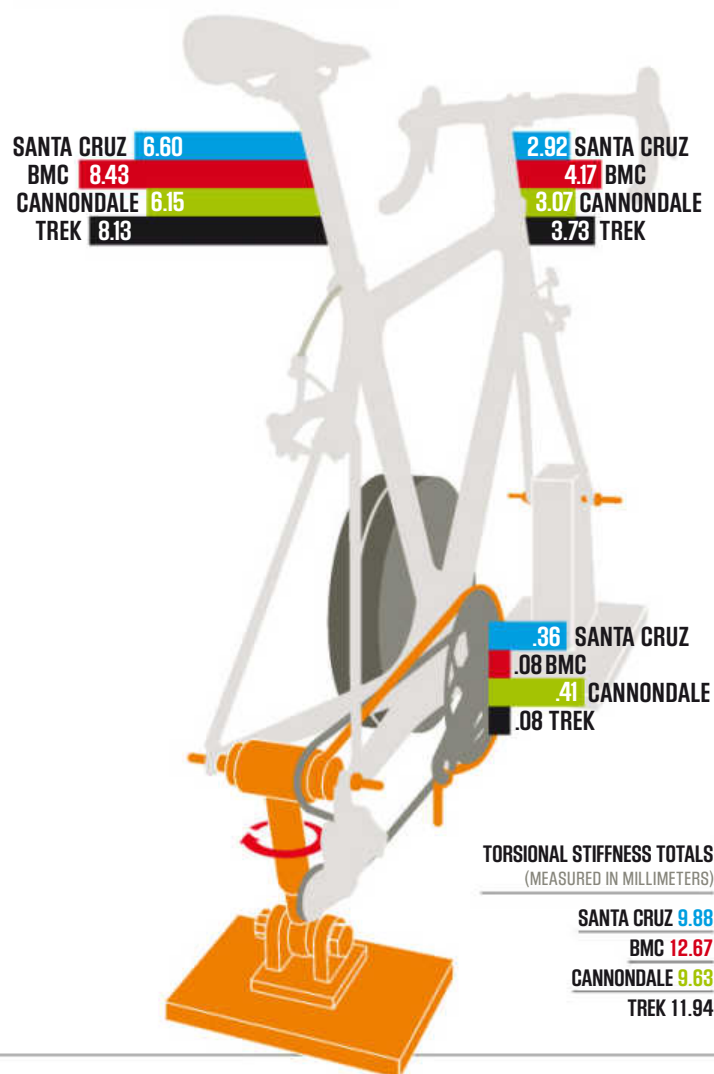
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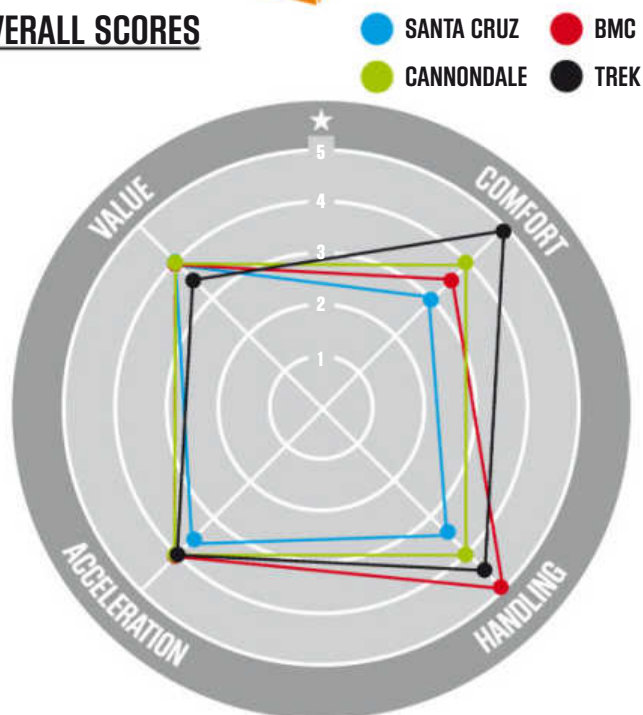
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TORSIONAL STIFFNESS TEST



OVERALL SCORES



THE BOTTOM LINE

The Cannondale and Trek dueled for the top spot in this test. It is an interesting pair, considering that they sit at opposite ends of the stiffness spectrum. While the Trek has more lateral deflection in the lab than the Cannondale, it is more comfortable and confidence-inspiring, which is why it walks away with the Editors' Pick. A better fork would go a long way toward making it even better.

With a smarter parts spec—particularly a 1X drivetrain—and more plushness in the front end, the Cannondale would probably have come out on top. It was tops in our test at overcoming the penalties associated with the 29er wheel size—oversteering, trouble clearing obstacles on climbs, and sluggish acceleration—which speaks to the lively and precise geometry of the bike.

BMC's TeamElite 01 handles better than both the Pro Caliber and F-Si and deserves some recognition. No other bike in the test is as agile through rocks and roots. Unfortunately, though, the MTT needs some serious improvement before it's on par with other damping systems. The movement resonates through the frame, which is a disconcerting sensation, especially under hard pedaling. It's a major flaw that holds back what would otherwise be a very good bike.

The Santa Cruz is the most difficult bike to assess in terms of race-worthiness. It doesn't excel in any category but doesn't fall far short in any, either. It feels a bit long and doesn't inspire confidence while climbing, but it descends well enough that it could be a winner on more technical courses. And keep in mind that the fit and overall connection between rider and bike depends heavily on the rider's body type and riding style. Lanky, aggressive riders might find the geometry quite comfortable, while shorter racers who love to pick quick-steering lines will feel stretched out and unbalanced.



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'CROSSING OVER

Approach it right, and a bit of cyclocross can pay dividends for your next road season

By Trevor Connor



GRANT HOLICKY

It was Halloween day. After weeks of slogging through long, slow rides in the wet and cold of a Pacific Northwest October, I had let my friends convince me to try a 'cross race. As we pulled into the parking lot, I looked around—at the crazy costumes, riders already grim-faced and dirty on the course, and the multitude of tents peddling gear and serving beer—and felt a bit ill. After months away from competition, I was having a minor pre-race panic attack.

Man, I had missed that feeling.

When autumn rolls around, most roadies and mountain bikers are thinking more about a bag of Doritos and fantasy football than their next interval session. But for some, the legs are finally finding their form, the races are getting sparse, and they're ready to challenge the neighbor's kid on her brand new tricycle just to feel that rush of adrenaline again.

Increasingly, many are turning to cyclocross to fill the competitive void—and get a jump on their off-season training.

"I ended up going to CrossVegas, which was my very first 'cross race, ever, and was immedi-

ately hooked," says Meredith Miller, who races on the road with Pepper Palace Pro Cycling and in 'cross for the Noosa squad. "I was like, 'oh man, I want to do more of this, and I want to do bigger races!'" She has since competed at the world championships in both road and 'cross.

According to Grant Holicky, head cyclocross coach at Apex Coaching and an avid masters cyclocross racer, 'cross originally developed as a way for cyclists to cope with the inclement weather of autumn. Long base miles on the road aren't a lot of fun when it's raining and cold. 'Cross workouts—with their variety and shorter durations—can provide the motivation to ride.

Overtraining is a concern, of course. Miller admits that a couple seasons of full road and 'cross calendars caught up with her. But Holicky feels there are real benefits to throwing some 'cross into your program. Apex Coaching, which has produced some of the nation's top cyclists, including Taylor Phinney, uses a coaching model that runs counter to the old-school approach of long, slow miles in the early season. This model, which is sometimes called "reverse periodization," fo-


cuses on short intensity and strength workouts early, followed by volume.

"Cyclists need strength in their legs," Holicky says, "and you get lots of that in 'cross."

While Holicky prefers this model for most athletes, he says it's a necessity for any road cyclist who races a relatively full 'cross calendar. "By doing intensity until December, you're almost going to flip-flop how you approach training in the off-season," says Miller, who recommends going back to long slow rides after 'cross is over.

The most important point, though, is to stay focused on your primary sport, no matter how much fun 'cross turns out to be. Beyond risking burnout, if you try to be great at multiple disciplines, you won't be able to hit your best in any of them.

Besides, both Holicky and Miller say the main reason to work in some 'cross races has less to do with the body than the mind.

"I go back to when I raced my first 'cross race in Vegas, and I was blown away at the atmosphere and the energy and the crowd," Miller says. "It couldn't have been a more different experience for me from what I generally felt at road races." 

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SET LIMITS

If you race the entire 'cross season, you won't be taking a break until January, which can be an issue for the following road season. "Pick a time to be done and don't get tied up in the points race," Holicky says. Calling it quits in November is a good strategy for many. He notes that even Danny Summerhill, a seven-time under-23 and junior national champion in both 'cross and road, who now races for UnitedHealthcare, is typically focused on the road season by the time 'cross nationals rolls around in January.

TAKE A BREAK

Holicky doesn't think it's a good idea to jump right into 'cross. "Athletes are concerned about taking four days off, but they can actually get a bump from [an extended break]," he says. Make sure you're rested before you slap on the knobby tubulars. If you race a full 'cross calendar, you should also take another short break after the season to refocus.

FACTOR IN THE INTENSITY

If you're just looking to do a few races but not specifically train for the intensity of 'cross, you don't really have to worry, Miller says. But if you do a full 'cross schedule, the old-school approach of ramping up intensity in January won't work. Instead, after your break, Miller recommends backing down and focusing on longer rides.

START EASY

You don't need to plan a boot camp worthy of the Navy SEALs just to enjoy a few races. Most road cyclists and mountain bikers have been training all year. "They're going to bring that power to a 'cross race," Miller says. There's no need to get creative with your training.

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

Both Miller and Holicky believe that practicing 'cross skills is the most important thing you can do to prepare for racing. "That can make a real difference and really turn your experience into a good one," says Miller, who adds that riding with experienced racers to practice dismounts, remounts, and technical riding is key. Holicky says most riders can get that by going to a weekly group 'cross ride.

RUN FOR IT

Holicky also recommends shifting at least some of your focus away from riding and toward running. "Twenty minutes, once per week is all you need," he says.

KEEP THE WEEK EASY

Holicky says it would be wise to view your races as your training. "Be careful about what you do the rest of the week," he says. "You can do too much." While dedicated 'cross racers will include a lot of intensity in their workouts, Holicky says a bit of sprint work on Tuesday and some threshold intervals on Wednesday may be all you need.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE TIRES

You'll hear the same conversation in every tent at a 'cross race: "What tires are you running? What pressure?" Switching up tread patterns may not be an option if you're running tubulars, but pressure can make a substantial difference. Miller generally runs 22psi but will go as low as 12psi in certain conditions. The low pressures take some getting used to, but they can make the difference between railing corners and flying into a ditch.



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11 am » Start of race
5 pm » End of race



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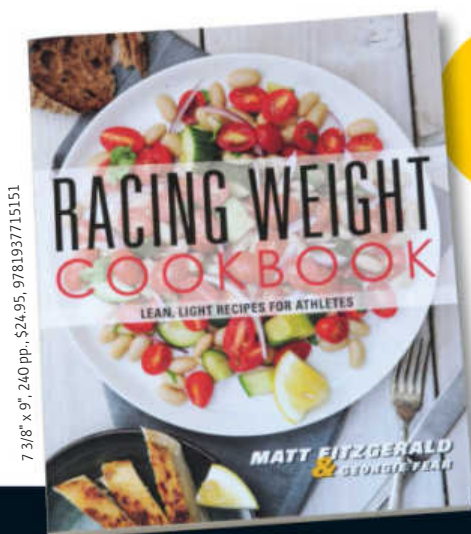
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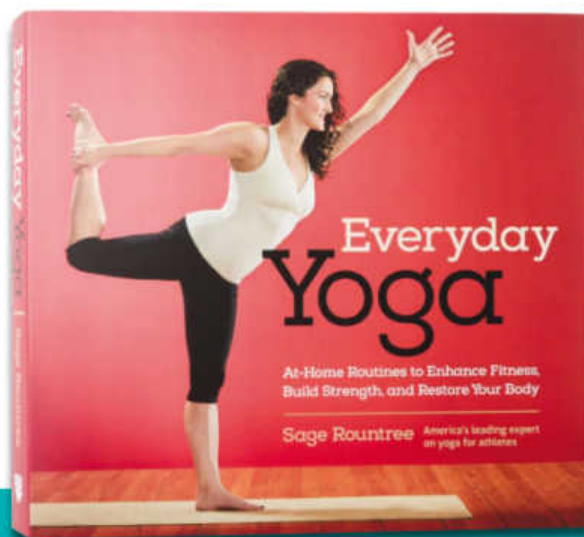
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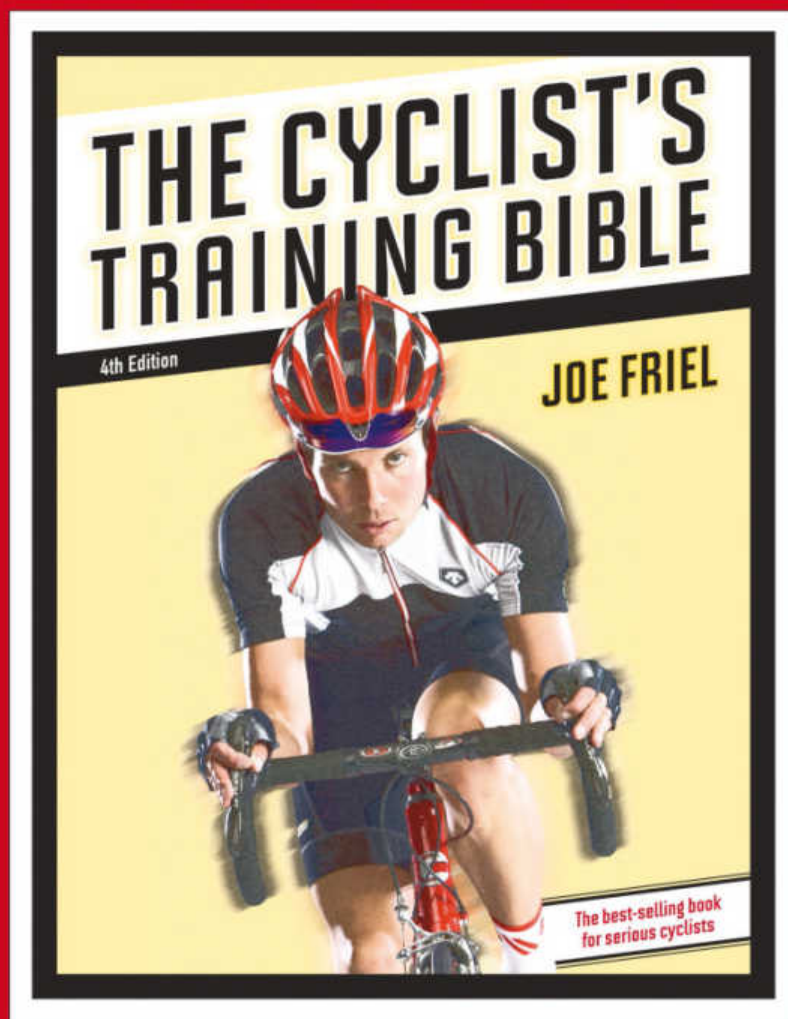
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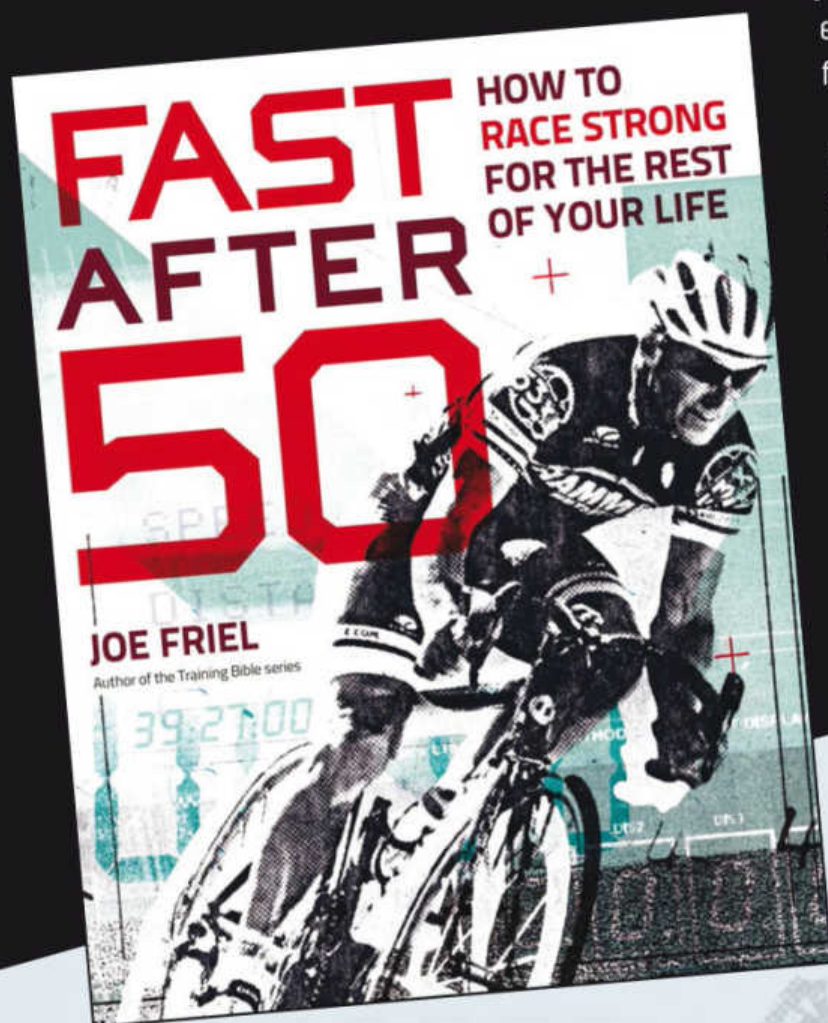


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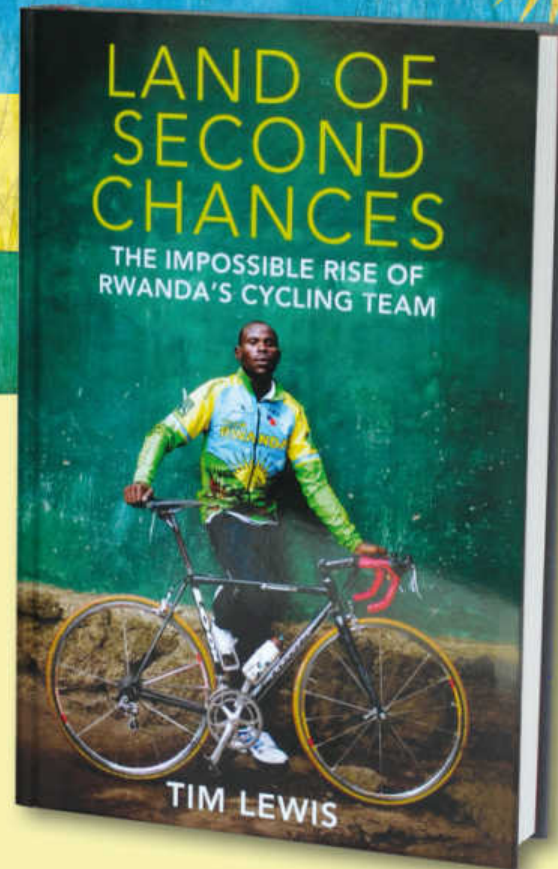
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Marital bliss

It's hard to be Peter Sagan. The plight of the handsome, young multi-millionaire has become such a popular topic in the press this year that I figured it was about time for someone to come to his aid. But not just any man—a man who understands his challenges. A man who has walked in his shoes and lived to tell the tale. That's right, a man who is married.

I may not be rich. Or handsome. Or young, for that matter. But like all husbands, I've come to learn a few things about criticism, lofty expectations, and not pinching girls' bottoms in public. So I'm pretty sure I'm qualified to offer a few words on behalf of the Tinkoff-Saxo rider.

First, let's get something straight: Peter Sagan is not in a slump. Winning the Amgen Tour of California and a fourth consecutive Tour de France points jersey is a season the likes of which 99 percent of elite pro cyclists can only dream. So why all the recent clatter about Sagan's decline in form?

The answer is that he has “married” poorly, entering into a committed relationship with a lunatic in the form of Tinkoff-Saxo team owner Oleg Tinkov. And while I often enjoy Tinkov's antics—in much the same way I enjoy those of Charlie Sheen when he's on a two-week bender—the Russian's recent assessments of the Slovak champion have been anything but charitable. Tinkov has endlessly slagged his star rider in the press, lamenting Sagan's lack of wins and repeatedly suggesting it was an error to sign him to an estimated \$4.3 million annual deal.

While I personally had the foresight not to marry a psychopath, this is an area in which I can still speak from experience. Like Tinkov, my wife occasionally questions the wisdom of her selection, accurately noting, for example, that my bike chain is the cleanest part of our home. It is during these awkward moments that I pretend, like Sagan, that I cannot speak English and pedal away quickly. (Peter, my boy, you're going to make one hell of a husband.)

Like those underlying many marital arguments, Tinkov's criticisms are often unfair and misplaced. Lost in his bluster, for example, is the fact that Tinkoff-Saxo actually revolves around the needs of GC leader Alberto Contador. That Sagan was able to accomplish what he did in July—including a gaggle of near wins—in the absence of dedicated team support is truly remarkable.

So while victories have proven somewhat elusive for Sagan, I don't know what more you could ask of a man forced to constantly subjugate his own ambitions for the good of the team. I mean, why can't you pick up groceries and take the kids to baseball practice, Oleg? Can't you see that Peter and I are in the middle of something here?


In truth, Tinkov's criticisms, like those of my lovely bride, derive less from malice than a desire to motivate action. And, as much as I hate to admit it, their approach is effective. This is why I want to go on the record and predict that not only will I clean out the garage, but Peter Sagan will enter 2016 wearing the rainbow stripes of the world champion. I mean, who among us hasn't been driven into a burst of productivity in an effort to end months of constant nagging? It's why I'd put money on Sagan to wheelie across the finish line in Richmond.

When he does, you had better believe that

Tinkov will appear, flowers in hand, to praise the Slovak as the only rider he's ever truly loved. But if Peter is smart, he'll recognize this as what it is—too little, too late from an abusive team owner. You see, if Peter Sagan has a problem, it is that he's trapped in a deeply dysfunctional relationship. And it's here that I, as a happily married man, can offer the advice he may need to hear most.

There are plenty of fish in the sea, Peter. And you don't have to live this way.

Find yourself a nice team, one who will commit to you and only you. A team that will build you up rather than tear you down. A team that will make you want to be a better man.

I think you'll learn that where you find happiness, so too will you find those missing wins. 

Dan Wuori's wife is neither an abusive tyrant nor, sadly, a Russian billionaire. Follow him on Twitter at @dwuori.



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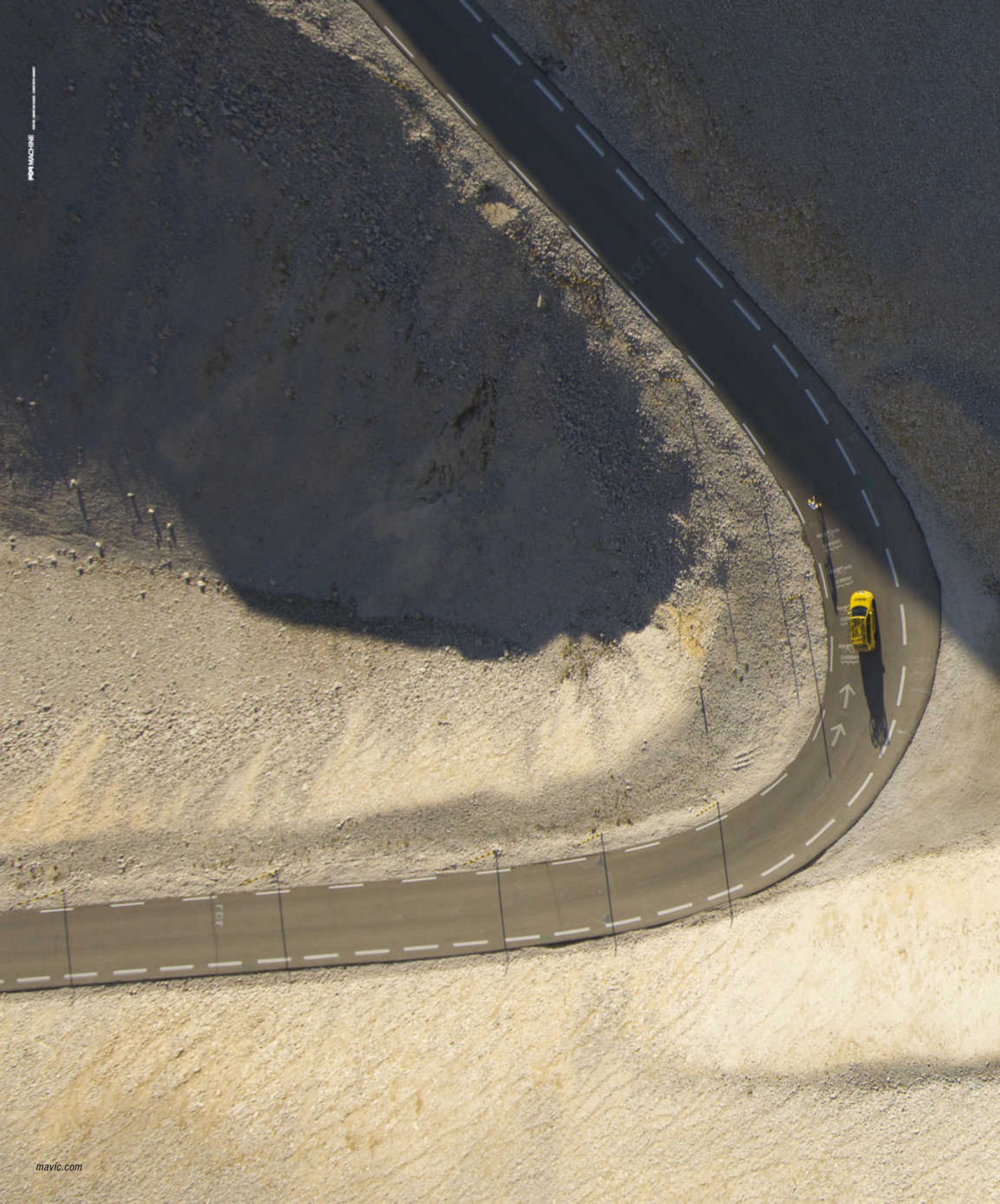
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stage 4 of the 2014 USA Pro Challenge
PHOTO BY: Casey B. Gibson

THIS PAGE: Stage 5 of the
2014 USA Pro Challenge
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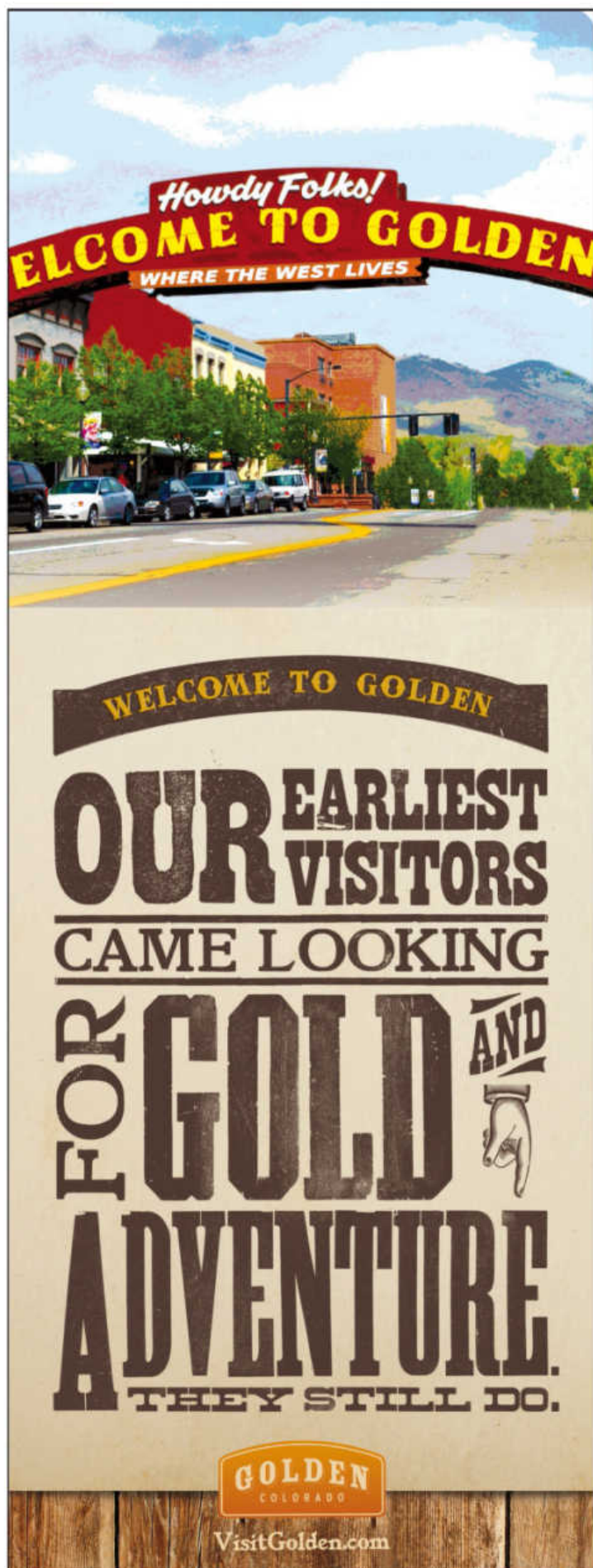
OFF THE FRONT

SHUT UP LEGS

Jens Voigt (Trek Factory Racing) pushes through the pain on stage 6, a time trial up Vail Pass, at the 2014 USA Pro Challenge. The Colorado stage race was his last as a professional. The affable German put on a show throughout the week, attacking on stage 3 through the Garden of the Gods, only being caught inside the final kilometer. During stage 7 in Denver he tried once again to snag victory from a breakaway, to no avail. After the race, he was given the Flamme Rouge, the red kite signifying the last kilometer of the race, signed by many of his fellow racers.

PHOTO BY JOHN PIERCE/PHOTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL





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CHALLENGE**



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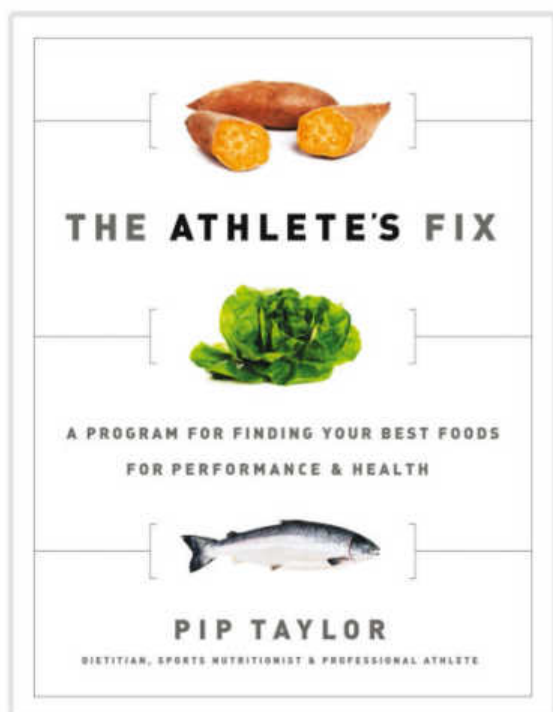
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As we look back on the Pro Challenge from the first four years, it's still hard to believe the crowds, the passion, the loyalty, and the excitement that has been demonstrated by fans of the sport. We are humbled by, and are greatly appreciative of, the overwhelming support that the USA Pro Challenge continues to receive. The third week in August has become a wonderful moment of truth for the State of Colorado, and we feel very fortunate to be a part of it.

We'll never forget the enthusiasm displayed by the fans at every start, finish, hill climb, sprint line, and the 600-plus miles of the race course in between. We are committed to bringing Colorado even bigger and better races in 2015 and beyond.

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— Levi Leipheimer (RadioShack), after winning the inaugural USA Pro Challenge in 2011



"I found this race to be one of the most beautiful races in the world. It is one of the best outside the Tour and Giro."

— Vincenzo Nibali (Liquigas-Cannondale), in 2012



"I could have raced in Spain or Italy, but I chose to race [the Pro Challenge] in the U.S."

— Jens Voigt (Trek Factory Racing)



"The crowds were absolutely incredible. Every year the crowds rival any race we do, including the Tour de France. It's hard to beat crowds like this, anywhere. This race is one of the highest class races in the world. To win it for the second time is no easy feat and I'm really honored."

—Tejay van Garderen (BMC Racing), overall winner in 2013 and 2014



"This race is special to me; it demonstrates a great passion for cycling in the States and that's what cycling needs. I'm very happy to be here."

— Fränk Schleck (Trek Factory Racing), in 2014

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This is the USA Pro Challenge, which enters its fifth year as “America’s Race,” a weeklong jaunt through the Colorado Rockies that has delivered thrilling high-altitude battles and deserving overall winners each year.

THE RIDERS

As the saying goes, it’s the racers that make the race, and this year’s field is wide open, with stars of the Tour de France mixing it up with up-and-comers from home and abroad.

In July, two-time winner and defending champion Tejay van Garderen (BMC Racing) rode a brilliant Tour de France, and came out of the second rest day sitting third overall, with a career-best podium finish in sight. However, on stage 17 he fell ill and was forced to abandon the race, climbing off his bike and into the team car in tears. Van Garderen has chosen to take his form to the Vuelta a España and will not defend his title in Colorado.

Instead, BMC will likely look to Australian

Rohan Dennis, whose 2015 season has included overall victory at the Santos Tour Down Under, a brief stint as the holder of the hour record, and a time trial stage win—and a day in the yellow jersey—at the Tour de France, followed by a pivotal role in BMC's team time trial victory at the Tour. Dennis is a strong candidate for time-trial victory; whether or not he can keep up with the best climbers at altitude is an unknown heading to the start in Steamboat Springs.

Another team looking to take overall victory is Cannondale-Garmin, which won the race with Christian Vande Velde in 2012. The American team with deep Colorado roots will be hoping to take victory with Boulder resident Tom Danielson, the two-time winner of the Tour of Utah who finished second overall at the Pro Challenge last year. Danielson, a high-altitude climbing specialist, has never finished worse than seventh overall in four editions, and has twice reached the final podium. Now 37, Danielson would dearly love to win this major race in his home state before retiring. Cannondale also brings 22-year-old Italian Davide Formolo, who broke through with a stage win in May at the Giro d'Italia.

Could 2015 be the first edition of the Pro Challenge won by a foreign rider? If so, there's a good chance it could come from Trek Factory Racing, which, like BMC and Cannondale, is an American-registered team funded by a major bike brand. The team brings U.S. national road champion Matthew Busche, who finished fifth overall last year, as well as Colombian climber Julian Arredondo, the winner of the King of the Mountains competition at the 2014 Giro d'Italia, and Spanish veteran Haimar Zubeldia, a top-10 finisher at the Tour de France on five occasions.

The Russian-backed Tinkoff-Saxo squad could well dominate every stage of the race. Last year, Polish rider Rafal Majka finished fourth overall, just after winning the Tour of Poland, and made it clear he hoped to return to win the race. In July, Majka won a mountain stage at the Tour, just as he'd done twice in 2014 before flying to Colorado. His teammate, Czech rider Roman Kreuziger, also spent July at the Tour riding in the service of Alberto Contador, and could be given the freedom to fight for overall victory. (Kreuziger has finished in the top 10 of the Tour de France on three occasions, most recently in 2013.)

And what of Peter Sagan? The four-time Tour de France points classification winner loves racing in the U.S. In May he won the overall, and two stages, at the Amgen Tour of California. During his last appearance at the Pro Challenge in 2013, Sagan won four stages and the points classification. The fact that the Israel-based Cycling Academy squad, which Sagan supports, will be in Colorado, means it's likely that the popular Slovakian rider will also be in the bunch, though that was unconfirmed at press time.

In Amets Txurruka, the Spanish team Caja



Rural-Seguros RGA has a highly rated climber. During his six years on the now disbanded Euskaltel-Euskadi squad, Txurruka was awarded the "most combative" prize of the 2007 Tour de France. So far in 2015, Txurruka has placed second overall at the Vuelta a Asturias in Spain and fourth overall at the Tour de Beauce in Canada, where he won the opening stage on Mont-Mégantic. Txurruka will be backed by veteran David Arroyo, who finished second overall at the 2010 Giro d'Italia, behind Ivan Basso (Tinkoff-Saxo) and ahead of Vincenzo Nibali (Astana).

Riders from domestic teams who will be looking to make an impact include Colombian climber Daniel Jaramillo (Jamis-Hagens Berman), American all-rounder Phil Gaimon (Optum-Kelly Benefit Strategies), and young New Zealanders James Oram (Axeon) and Dion Smith (Hincapie Racing Team).

THE ROUTE

For 2015, the Pro Challenge route will visit nine host cities and cover 605 miles over seven stages. And while the race could be won or lost on any stage, there are two that stand out as critical for all riders aiming to reach the final podium—the summit finish on stage 2 at Arapahoe Basin and the stage 5 time trial in Breckenridge.

After an opening circuit race in the start town of Steamboat Springs, stage 2 departs Steamboat for three classified climbs, ending with a five-mile ascent up Loveland Pass to Arapahoe Basin, a summit finish at almost 11,000 feet of elevation. It's likely the stage winner will also take the race lead, requiring his team to try and defend the lead over the ensuing five difficult stages.

The almighty Independence Pass, which tops out at 12,095 feet, will feature on stage 3 from Copper Mountain Resort to Aspen, with the finish at the bottom of the harrowing descent. It returns on stage 4, which starts with the scenic climb, before the route takes in the climbs over Hoosier Pass and the short, steep Moonstone Road late in the stage, then descends into Breckenridge. Time gaps between the overall favorites shouldn't be significant on these stages, though

anyone who suffers from the effects of altitude on Independence Pass at the end of stage 3—or the descent—can say goodbye to their GC ambitions.

In 2011, Tejay van Garderen opened up a 34-second gap over Levi Leipheimer on the 20-mile rainy descent of Independence Pass to take the race lead. In 2013, Australian Lachlan Morton attacked on Hoosier Pass, drawing out Swiss rider Mathias Frank. The pair crested Moonstone Road with a one-minute lead, with Frank winning the stage and Morton taking the race lead, while behind Sagan and van Garderen attacked on Moonstone Road to open a gap on the field.

In three of the four editions of the Pro Challenge, the winner of the time trial has gone on to win the overall. However, for all three of those years the time trial was a 16km uphill affair held in Vail. (In 2013, Taylor Phinney of BMC Racing won the final-stage time trial in Denver, with Vande Velde locking up the GC.) This year, the time trial moves to Breckenridge, and while it delivers a climb—returning to Moonstone Road—there's also a significant descent down Boreas Pass that will test riders' handling skills as well.

The final two stages of the race will be held along the Front Range, at lower elevation, and are less likely to shake up the classification.

The penultimate stage starts along the plains, in Loveland, then heads up the north side of Carter Lake before climbing to the top of Rist Canyon. After the fast descent, the route traverses the lumpy roads around Horsetooth Reservoir to the finish in Fort Collins. The steep and punchy climbs late in the day could see small gaps open, but a major shakeup in the GC battle is unlikely.

The final stage from Golden to Denver should be one for the sprinters, and offers one last chance for any teams that have yet to leave an impact on the race to take some risks. A climb up Lookout Mountain will spring the day's breakaway, leaving the sprint teams roughly 50 miles to reel it back before setting up for a sprint on the finishing circuits in Denver.

And it's there, in front of the state capitol building, that the overall winner of the USA Pro Challenge will be crowned for the fifth straight year. —NEAL ROGERS

RACING 101

Stage races can seem complicated, but that's part of the beauty. Once you understand them, you'll find there's so much going on that it's impossible to be bored. So if you're not already hooked, here's a quick primer:

THE OVERALL

Also called the general classification, this ranks the riders by their cumulative time over the race's multiple days. Riders aiming for a high ranking are called "GC" riders. They are often said to be protected by teammates during the stages.

STAGES

While the overall winner is the rider with the lowest total time over all stages, each stage is also a self-contained race with an individual winner. The steep mountain stages are where the GC riders can attack and gain time over their rivals. Sprinters are usually terrible climbers, so flat stages are for them. One weird thing: When riders finish in a bunch, they are all awarded the same time. This is a safety issue. Without this rule, too many riders would vie to win every day, to avoid losing time, and there would be carnage at the finish. With this rule, GC riders can hang back during flat finishes and let the sprinters battle it out.

TIME TRIALS

Along with the mountains, time trial stages can also have a big impact on the general classification. Riders set out one at a time and race against the clock, often on aerodynamically optimized bikes. Time trials are much shorter than regular stages, but because the riders are on their own, the time differences can be substantial. Time trials are known as the race of truth.

BREAKAWAYS

For riders who cannot realistically win the overall, a stage, or one of the jersey competitions, a breakaway can offer a few hours in the limelight. Most days, a small group will ride off the front of the main group and open up a lead of several minutes. The riders in the breakaway will get extended TV time—for themselves and their sponsors. Sometimes they manage to stay away until the finish, but in most cases they get caught.

BROADCAST SCHEDULE

All times are Mountain Daylight Time

PREVIEW SHOW / SUNDAY, AUG 16
2-3 PM PREMIERE (8-9 PM REPEAT)

STAGE 1 / MONDAY, AUG 17
2-4PM LIVE (7-9PM REPEAT)

STAGE 2 / TUESDAY, AUG 18
2-4PM LIVE (7-9PM REPEAT)

STAGE 3 / WEDNESDAY, AUG 19
2-4PM LIVE (7-9PM REPEAT)

STAGE 4 / THURSDAY, AUG 20
2-4PM LIVE (7-9PM REPEAT)

STAGE 5 / FRIDAY, AUG 21
2-4PM LIVE (Aug 22, 7-9AM REPEAT)

STAGE 6 / SATURDAY, AUG 22
2-4PM LIVE (Aug 23, 6-8AM REPEAT)

STAGE 7 / SUNDAY, AUG 23
2-4PM LIVE
4-6PM Delay (Universal Sports)



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THE JERSEYS



GENERAL CLASSIFICATION

The rider with the lowest cumulative time over the race's multiple days.



SPRINT COMPETITION

Every sprint stage has points on offer for the first few riders across the finish line and at an intermediate sprint somewhere out on course. This jersey signifies the rider with the most sprint points.



KING OF THE MOUNTAINS

There are points to be gained at select summits along the route, as well as at the finish line of mountain stages. This jersey goes to the rider with the most mountain points.



BEST YOUNG RIDER

This competition is based on the general classification—lowest cumulative time—but is restricted to riders aged 23 and under.



MOST AGGRESSIVE RIDER

This is a subjective award given daily to the rider whom the judges feel put in the gutsiest performance—for things like getting into a breakaway or racing despite an injury.



BEST COLORADO RIDER COMPETITION

This jersey is based on the general classification, and, as the name suggests, it goes to the Colorado resident or native with the best overall time.



GET OUT THERE

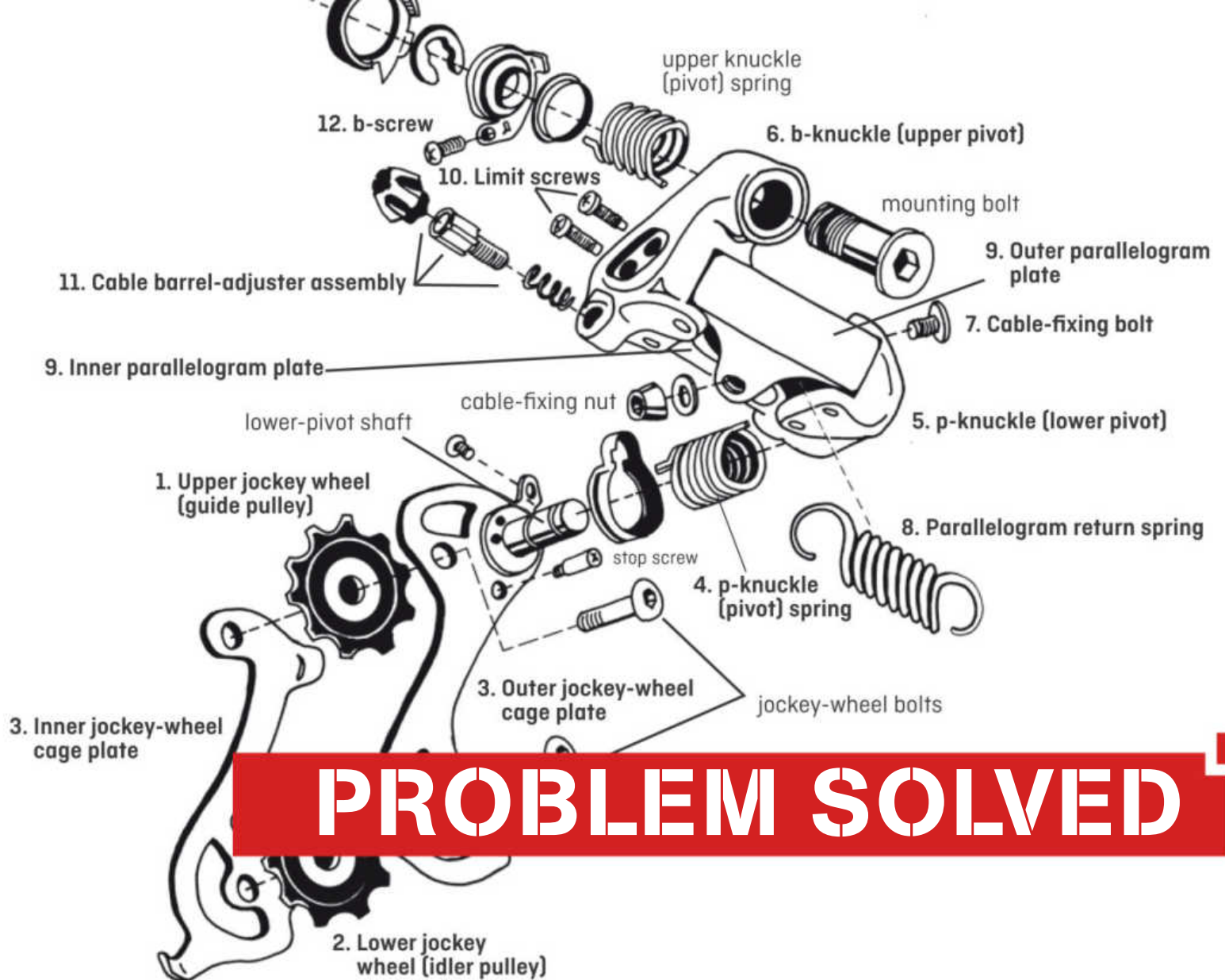


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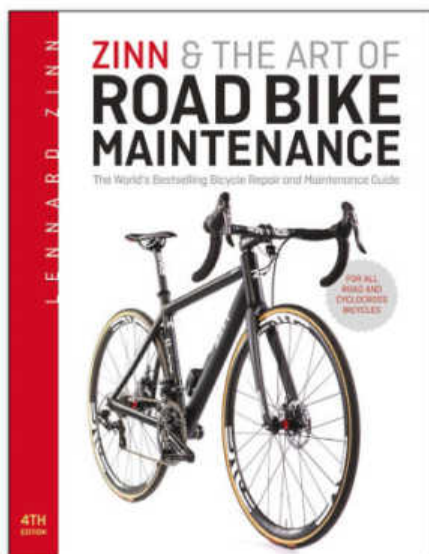


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THE STAGES

1 STEAMBOAT SPRINGS CIRCUIT, 97 MILES / 6,518 FEET

MONDAY, AUG. 17 2-4PM MDT



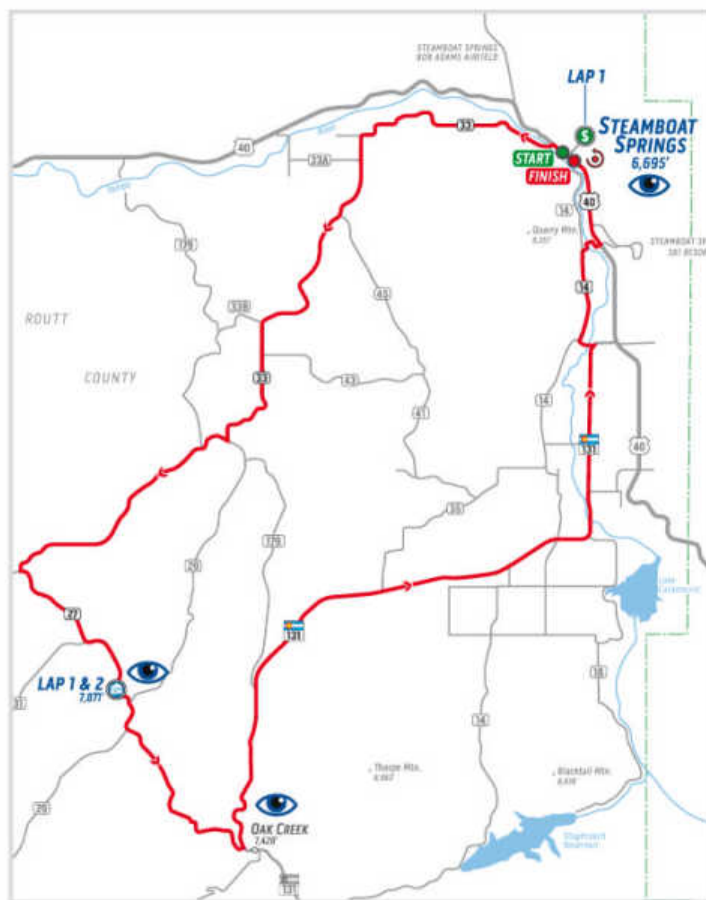
THE USA PRO CHALLENGE returns to the rolling roads of Routt County after a two-year absence for a classic circuit race. The peloton will do two laps of the 49-mile route, which offers fast straightaways, twisting backroads, and a few steep surprises. Couple that with the ambiance of Steamboat Springs, and you have the ingredients for a thrilling opening stage. There will be great spectating opportunities in Steamboat Springs, at the KOM point on Route 27, and in the town of Oak Creek. Will Steamboat Springs be treated to another classic sprint finish, or will the challenges of Routt County create an opportunity for a surprise yellow jersey winner?

KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Steamboat Springs
- KOM at Route 27
- Oak Creek
- Finish line

SKI TOWN USA

Howelsen Hill Ski Area in Steamboat Springs is the oldest ski area in continuous use in Colorado. It has been the training ground for more than 70 Olympians who have made over 90 Winter Olympic appearances. Built in 1914, it was renamed in 1917 in honor of its founder, Carl Howelsen, a Norwegian immigrant.





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2 STEAMBOAT SPRINGS TO ARAPAHOE BASIN, 104 MILES / 8,965 FEET

TUESDAY, AUG. 18 2-4PM MDT



PRESENTED BY



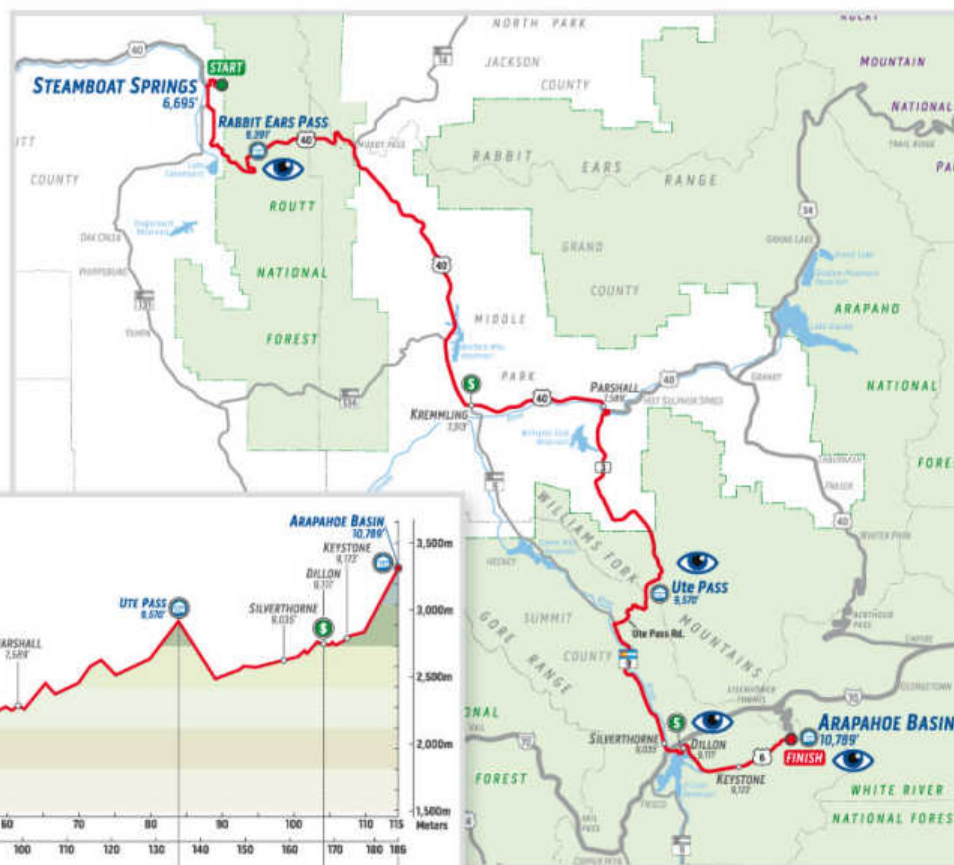
AFTER LEAVING STEAMBOAT SPRINGS on stage 2, the field will have little time to settle in before tackling 9,426-foot Rabbit Ears Pass. From there, this familiar route heads south to a sprint line in Kremmling, then onto Grand County and the climb of 9,500-foot Ute Pass. This new addition adds a 13-mile stretch of dirt road and a new KOM point. A quick descent then sends the pack through Silverthorne and a new sprint in downtown Dillon. Unlike in past years, the 2015 route then turns east and grinds up the five-mile climb of Loveland Pass to finish at Arapahoe Basin, at nearly 11,000 feet. Look for jerseys to change hands on this new summit finish.

KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Rabbit Ears Pass
- Ute Pass
- Dillon sprint line
- Final climb to Arapahoe Basin

COSTUME PARTY

The Pro Challenge has gained a reputation for its enthusiastic and colorful fans. A countless number of costumes have appeared along the race route in its four editions, including nearly every type of farm animal, vikings, pandas, a hot pink gorilla, a giant chocolate chip cookie, and those in poorly worn Borat swimsuits.



I will endure. I will enjoy.

I shall only partake in this crazy sport I love, because I love it.

And I will quit when I quit loving it.

I am a representative of this sport.

As such, I will do my part to take the "ass" out of ambassador.

No matter how goofy somebody looks, I shall not mock.

But I will mock myself. Often.

I may even crack a smile.

I will wave at everyone I see.

When my wave is not returned, I will not shake my head.

Because I do not know what's going on in theirs.

I will be inclusive. Even of the exclusive.

I will encourage the beginner, the professional and everyone in between.

I will place joy above performance, use my fingers for peace, not profanity,
and I will focus on the scenery more than the scene.

I will not be stupid. I understand that cars are bigger and faster.

But I also know that cars are not my enemy. Just as I know that I am not theirs.

Whatever my jersey may say, I know we're all on the same team.

Because we're all on the same team.

And when I'm suffering the most, I will remember that this is not life or death.

Even if it is my life.

ENDURE & ENJOY



Signature

Date

Pearlizumi.com / ThePact

3 COPPER MOUNTAIN TO ASPEN, 101 MILES / 7,419 FEET

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 19 2-4PM MDT



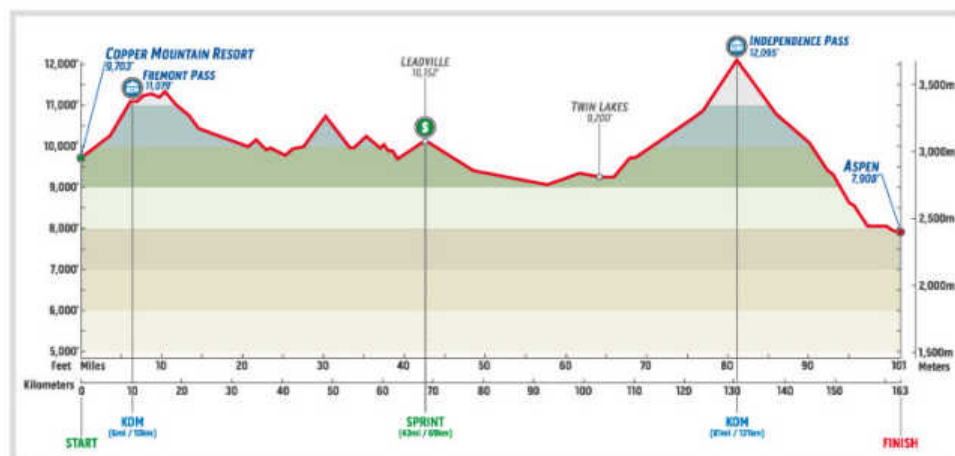
PRESENTED BY



MORE THAN HALF of stage 3 takes place above 10,000 feet, and the climbing starts as soon as the riders head out from new race host venue, Copper Mountain. An ascent of 11,079-foot Fremont Pass leads into a lap along the shores of Turquoise Lake and a quick sprint through Leadville. For the finale, the route heads over iconic Independence Pass, at 12,095 feet, before the breathtaking descent into Aspen, where some of the most memorable moments in Pro Challenge history have played out.

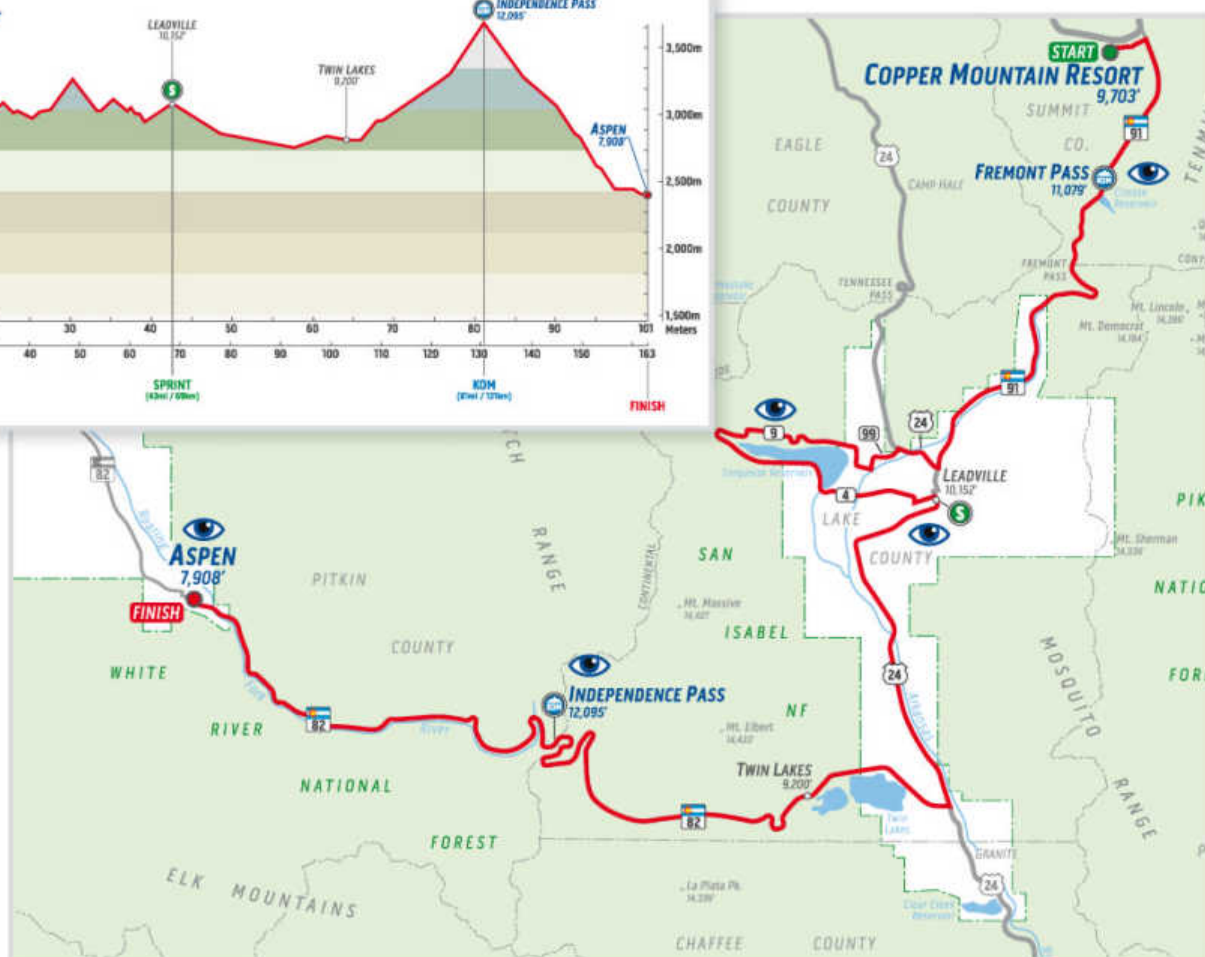
KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- KOM at Fremont Pass
- Turquoise Lake
- Leadville sprint line
- KOM at Independence Pass
- Finish in Aspen



WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

On average, a rider will go through 13 bottles of water per stage. Over four editions of the Pro Challenge, with 28 total stages and 512 riders, there have been approximately 46,592 water bottles used during the race.



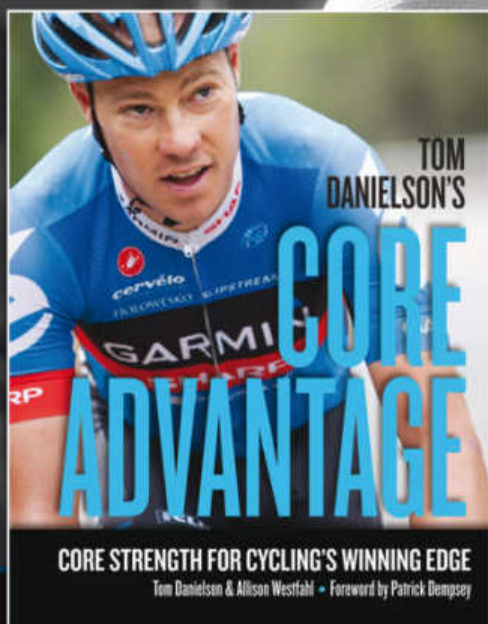
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4 ASPEN TO BRECKENRIDGE, 126 MILES / 9,631 FEET

THURSDAY, AUG. 20 2-4PM MDT



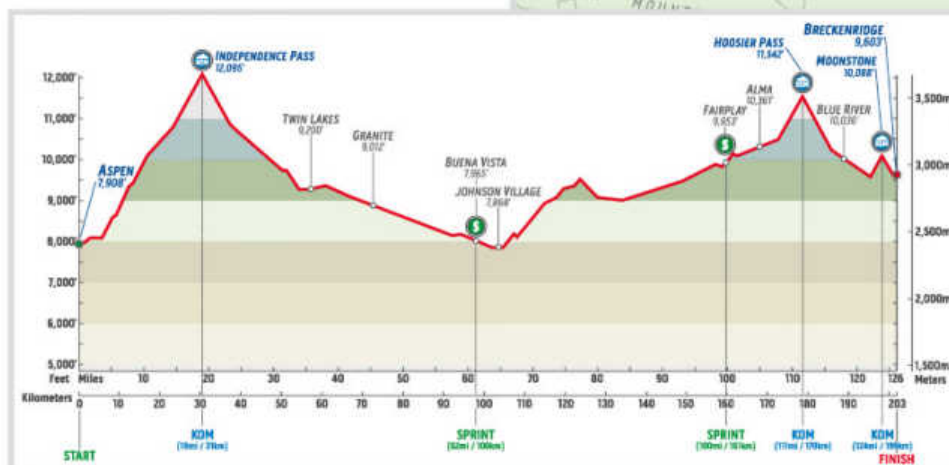
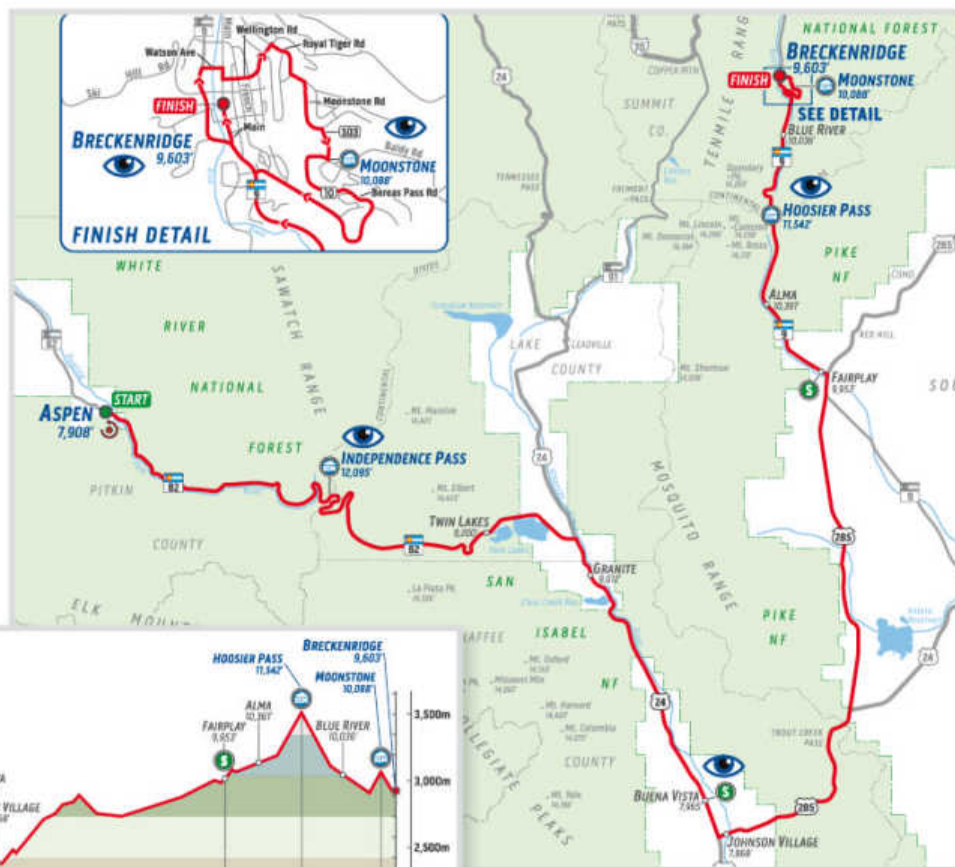
PRESENTED BY



THIS ROUTE, the Pro Challenge's biggest climbing day of 2015, debuted in the 2013 edition of the race and connects its two most visited host cities, Aspen and Breckenridge. A 20-mile climb of Independence Pass kicks things off with a bang, but that's only the beginning. The riders will then have to tackle the climbs of Trout Creek Pass and Hoosier Pass, plus sprints in Buena Vista and Fairplay. And before the finish in Breckenridge, there is the final steep climb of Moonstone Road and the descent of Boreas Pass Road. Stage 4 could prove to be the decisive stage of the 2015 Pro Challenge.

KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- KOM at Independence Pass
- Buena Vista sprint line
- KOM at Hoosier Pass
- Moonstone Road in Breckenridge
- Finish line



SILVER CITY

Aspen has featured in every edition of the Pro Challenge and is home to one of the richest silver lodes in the world. The silver mines produced nearly \$100 million of silver ore during peak production.

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*Bad news, it's
something else.*



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*But if your
lenses
are dirty...*

**Looks
GOOD?**

Look FOR
WEAR N' TEAR



Chain Wear
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**Looks
WORN?**

CHAIN IS SHOT.

Time for surgery.

REMOVE. REPLACE. READY TO ROLL.

WAIT!

Lube UP FIRST.

*Get your mind
out of the gutter.*

Now...

**KEEP THAT CHAIN
LOOKING FRESH**



CAN YOU STAY AWAY FROM DIRT, RAIN, DUST?

YES

I promise
TO ONLY
RIDE ON NEW
PAVEMENT ON
SUNNY DAYS.

*Good luck
with that....*

NO

I bike
WHENEVER &
WHEREVER
I PLEASE.



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AND FOR THE CLEAN THAT WILL
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5 BRECKENRIDGE TIME TRIAL, 8.5 MILES / 792 FEET

FRIDAY, AUG. 21 2-4PM MDT

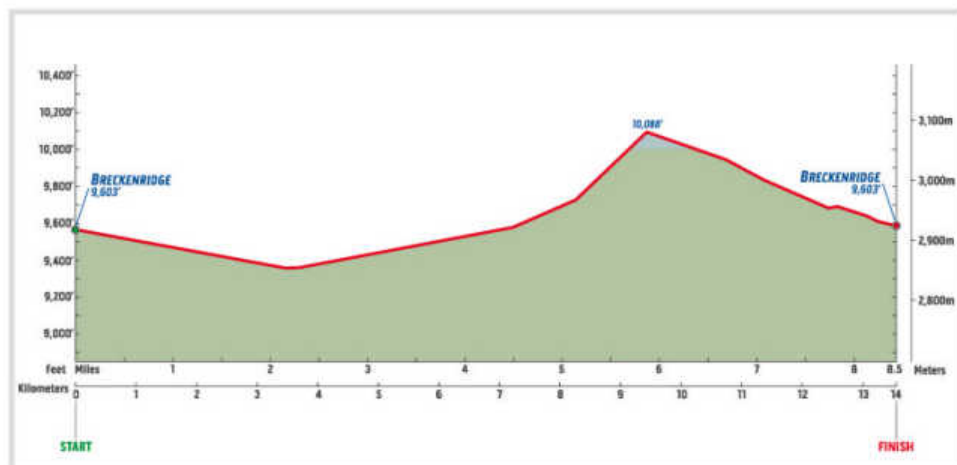


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NEW FOR 2015, the 8.5-mile Breckenridge time trial starts on flat roads before returning to the climb of Moonstone Road used on stage 4. The day could be won or lost on the tricky descent of Boreas Pass Road. The winner will be a rider who can contend with the flats, dance up the climbs, and carve the descents.

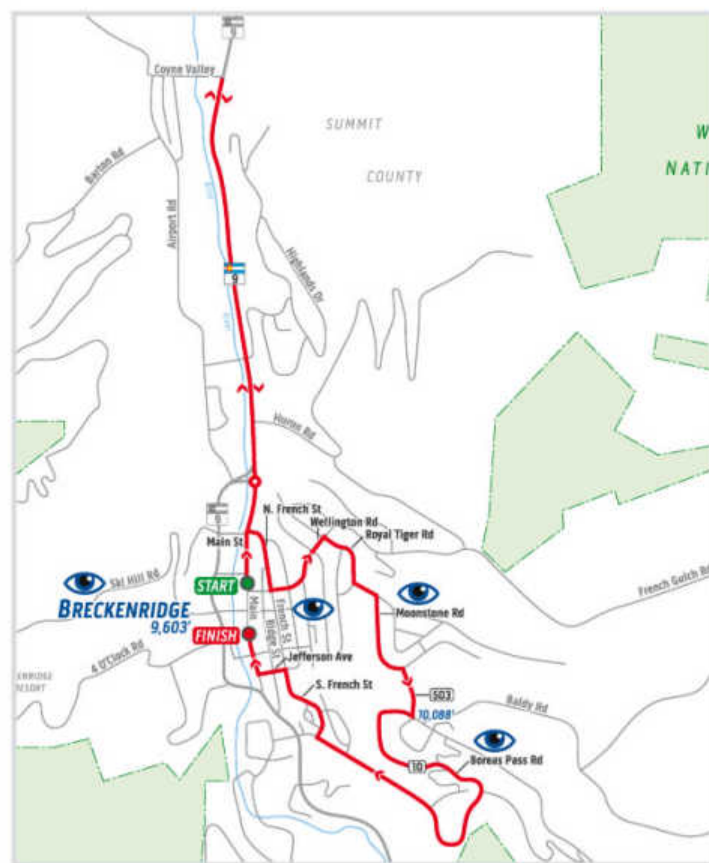
KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Start house
- French Street
- The climb of Moonstone Road
- Descent of Boreas Pass
- Finish line



BRECK BEGINNINGS

The town of Breckenridge was formally created in November 1859 by General George E. Spencer. Spencer chose the name "Breckenridge" after John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky, the 14th Vice President of the United States, in the hopes of flattering the government and gaining a post office. He succeeded.



JOHN PIERCE/PHOTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL/USAPC



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6 LOVELAND TO FORT COLLINS, 102 MILES / 6,228 FEET

SATURDAY, AUG. 21 2-4PM MDT



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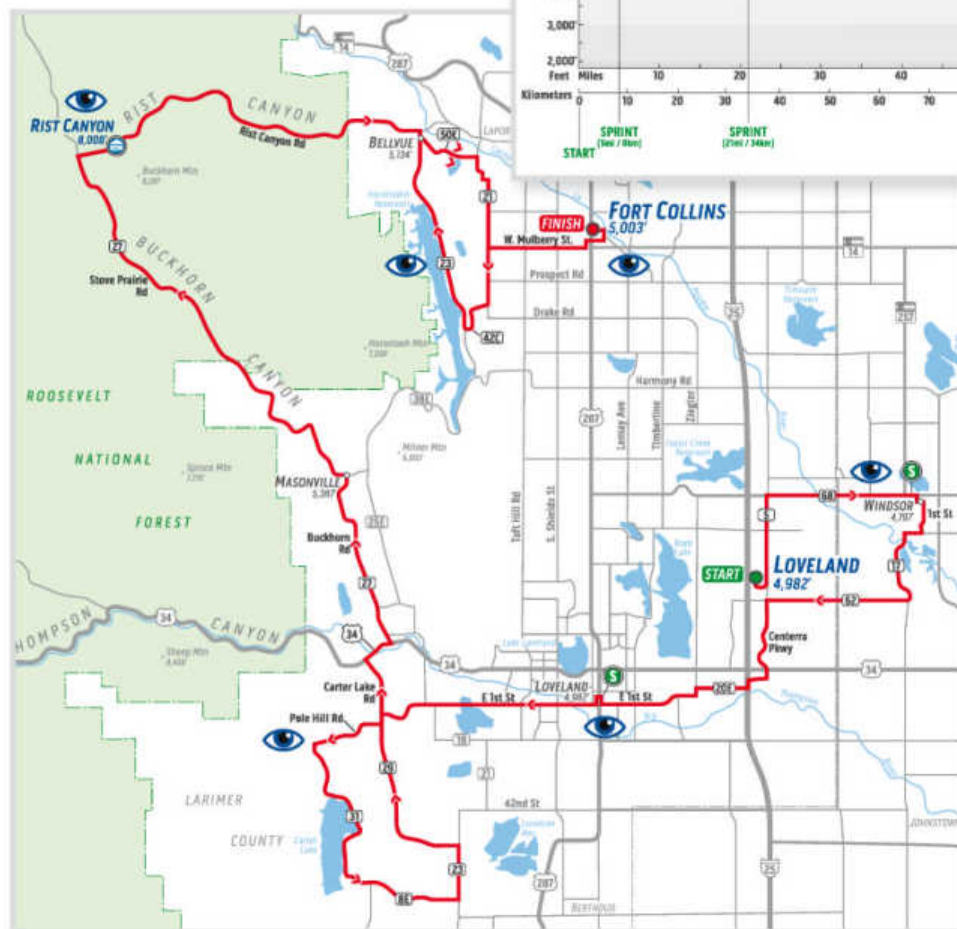


THE START AND FINISH locations of stage 6 may be familiar, but the dynamic route between the two is brand new. The stage does not offer huge elevation gain, but the smaller, punchier climbs could provide a sting. The route first takes on the steep climb to Carter Lake before looping through Masonville and grinding to the top of Rist Canyon from the west. This will be one of the last chances for overall contenders to make a move, with the jagged rollers of Horsetooth Reservoir offering a launching pad before the descent into Fort Collins.



KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Windsor sprint line
- Loveland sprint line
- Climb to Carter Lake
- KOM at Rist Canyon
- Horsetooth Reservoir
- Finish line



MAIN STREET, USA

The architecture of Fort Collins helped inspire the design of "Main Street, U.S.A.," a "themed land" inside the main entrance of the many Disneyland-style parks run by The Walt Disney Company around the world. Harper Goff, who created the attraction with Walt Disney, grew up in Fort Collins and returned to the city in the 1950s to photograph the buildings to use as a model.

CASEY B. GIBSON: HYUNG CHANG/GETTY IMAGES

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7 GOLDEN TO DENVER, 68 MILES / 3,237 FEET

SUNDAY, AUG. 23 4-6PM MDT 

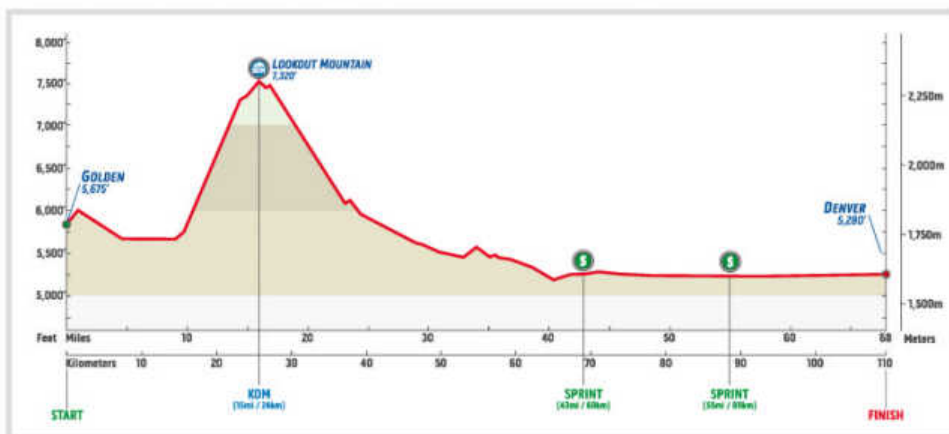
PRESENTED BY



FOR THE FINAL STAGE of 2015, the Pro Challenge goes back to its roots, utilizing the same course as the final stage of the inaugural Pro Challenge in 2011. After a short loop on back roads north of Golden, the race will tackle the four-mile climb of Lookout Mountain. After another quick pass through Golden, the route flashes through the towns of Wheat Ridge and Lakewood en route to downtown Denver. There, the peloton will face four laps of a familiar Denver circuit through Civic Center Park, City Park, and 17th street, before finishing in front of the state capitol building.

KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Start and sprint line in Golden
- KOM at Lookout Mountain
- Denver circuits (City Park, 17th Street, Capitol)



AMERICAN FLYERS

The final stage of the Pro Challenge will begin under the famous Golden city arch, which reads "Howdy Folks!" The arch was featured in the classic 1980s cycling movie American Flyers. A majority of the film's race action came from the now defunct Coors Classic.





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EMPOWER



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The team's mission is to inspire, educate and empower the millions of other people in the world who are affected by this condition.

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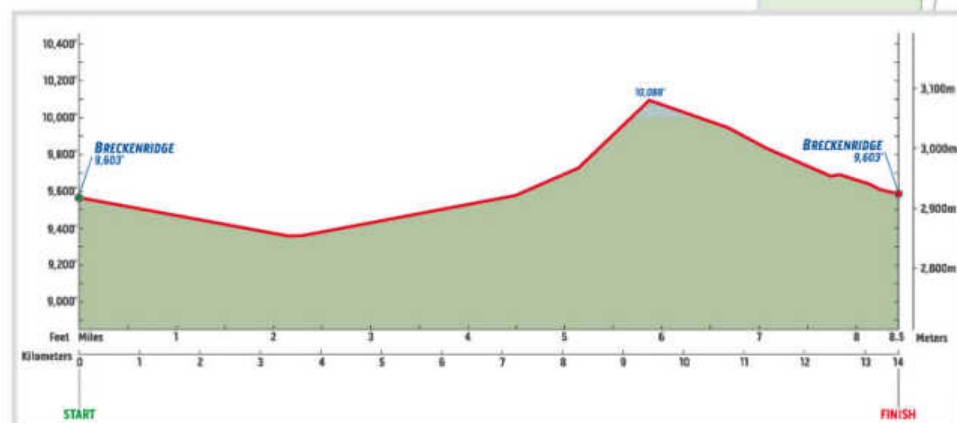
1 BRECKENRIDGE TIME TRIAL, 8.5 MILES

FRIDAY, AUG. 21

STAGE 1 OF THE INAUGURAL Women's USA Pro Challenge takes place on the same Breckenridge time trial as the men's stage 5, and on the same day. The 8.5-mile route begins on flat roads north of town before turning back and ascending the steep pitches of Moonstone Road. Then it's the tricky descent of Boreas Pass before heading back into Breckenridge for the finish.

KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Start house
- French Street
- The climb of Moonstone Road
- Finish line



THE WOMEN'S JERSEYS



GENERAL CLASSIFICATION



QUEEN OF THE MOUNTAINS



SPRINT COMPETITION



BEST YOUNG RIDER



MOST COURAGEOUS RIDER



JEREMY SWANSON

2 LOVELAND TO FORT COLLINS, 58 MILES

SATURDAY, AUG. 22



AFTER ROLLING OUT FROM LOVELAND, stage 2 climbs for nearly 20 miles up Buckhorn Canyon, through Masonville, and to the top of Rist Canyon, approaching from the steep west side. The peloton will then head straight down the twisting descent of Rist Canyon's east side before tackling 18 miles of open road on the way to Fort Collins. It's basically the same route the men will ride this day, minus the climb to Carter Lake and the steep rollers around Horsetooth Reservoir.



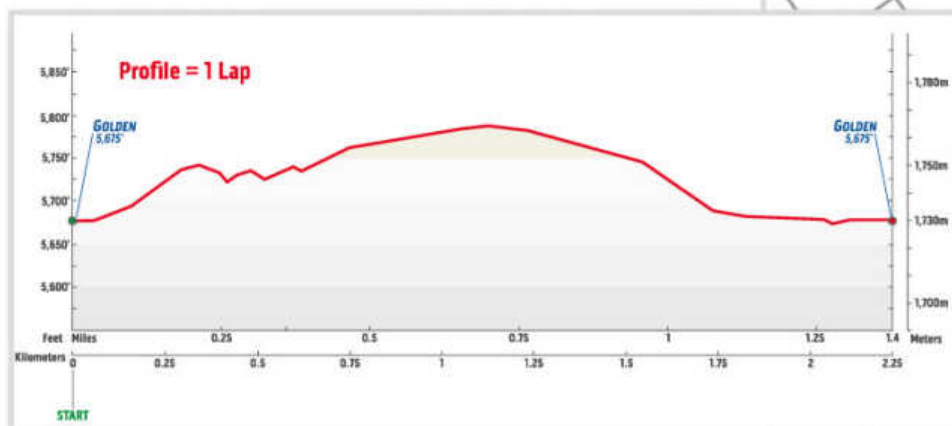
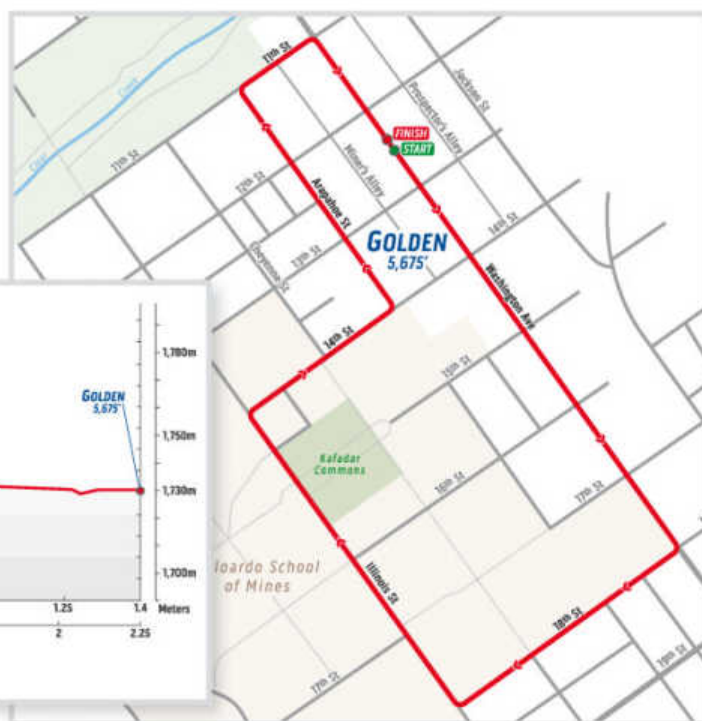
KEY VIEWING LOCATIONS

- Loveland sprint line
- KOM at Rist Canyon
- Finish line

3 GOLDEN CIRCUIT, 60 MINUTES

SUNDAY, AUG. 23

SPECTATOR-FRIENDLY STAGE 3 takes place on a technical circuit through downtown Golden. Each lap offers steep hills and technical corners on a tight 1.5-mile route, looping through the Colorado School of Mines campus, with the start-finish line on Golden's main street, Washington Avenue.



DREAM BIG

Ah, the glamorous life of the pro cyclist.

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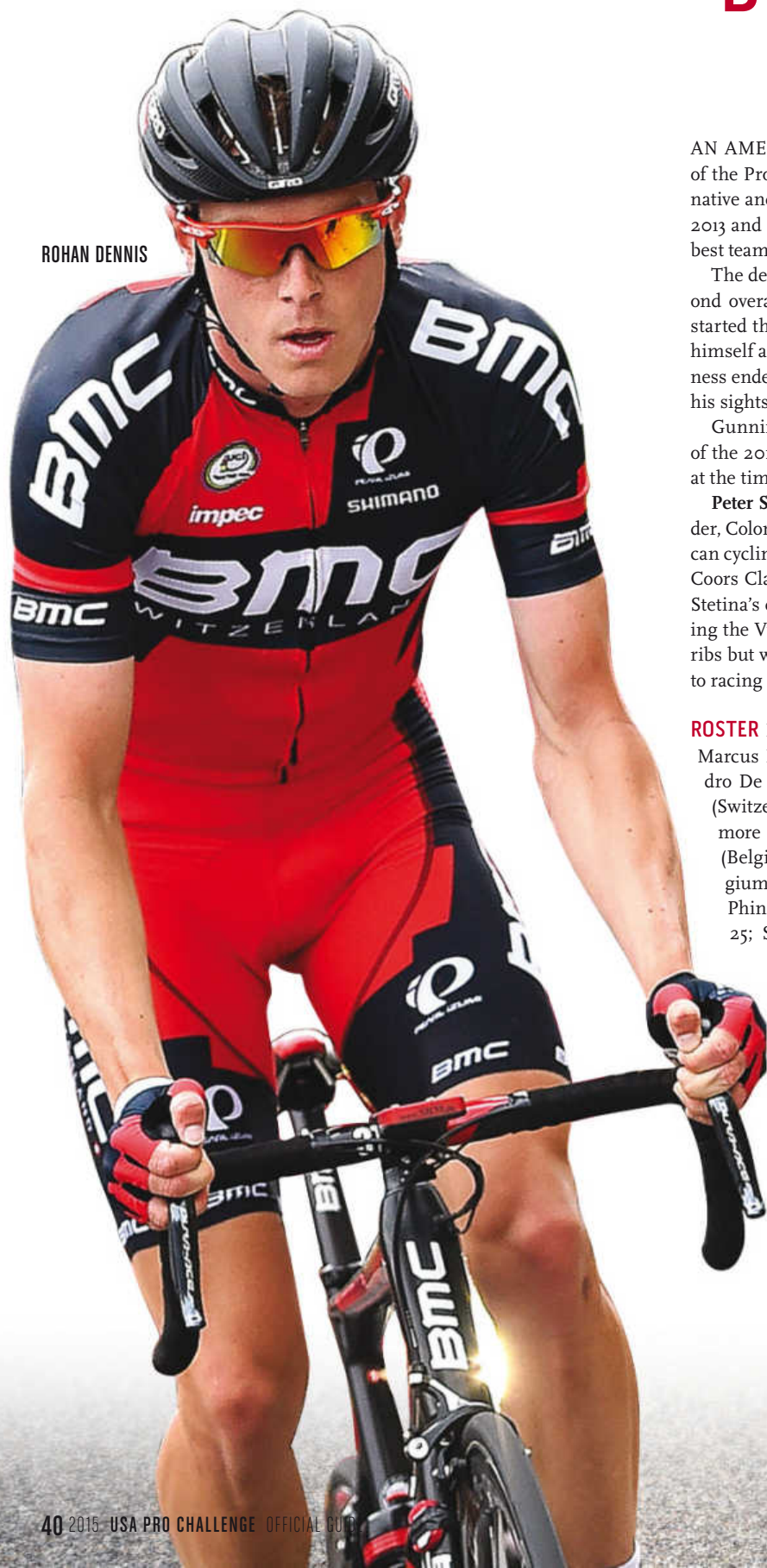
THE TEAMS



BMC RACING TEAM

(USA)

ROHAN DENNIS



AN AMERICAN RIDER on an American team has won all four editions of the Pro Challenge. BMC has accounted for two of those, with Montana native and Aspen resident **Tejay van Garderen** having taken top honors in 2013 and 2014. As we saw in France last month, BMC is one of the world's best teams, and van Garderen can compete with any GC rider in the world.

The defending champion is arguably enjoying his best season ever. Second overall in June's prestigious Critérium du Dauphiné, van Garderen started the Tour de France as a dark-horse favorite but quickly established himself as one of the best GC riders in a deep field. But it was not to be. Illness ended van Garderen's run for the podium on stage 17. He has now set his sights on the Vuelta a España and will not defend his title in Colorado.

Gunning for a high GC placing will be **Rohan Dennis**, winner of stage 1 of the 2015 Tour. The former hour record holder is one of the world's best at the time trial, and is a solid climber as well.

Peter Stetina has several reasons to target the Pro Challenge. The Boulder, Colorado, native finished ninth overall in 2012 and is the son of American cycling legend Dale Stetina, a two-time winner of Colorado's legendary Coors Classic. But the biggest reason would be that just four months ago Stetina's career lay in the balance after he slammed into a metal pole during the Vuelta Pais Vasco stage race in Spain. He broke his knee and four ribs but was barely out of surgery when he was already pledging to return to racing in 2015.

ROSTER Darwin Atapuma (Colombia), 27; Brent Bookwalter (USA), 31; Marcus Burghardt (Germany), 32; Damiano Caruso (Italy), 27; Alessandro De Marchi (Italy), 29; Rohan Dennis (Australia), 25; Silvan Dillier (Switzerland), 24; Jempy Drucker (Luxembourg), 28; Campbell Flakemore (Australia), 22; Philippe Gilbert (Belgium), 33; Ben Hermans (Belgium), 29; Stefan Küng (Switzerland), 21; Klass Lodewyck (Belgium), 27; Amaël Moinard (France), 33; Daniel Oss (Italy), 28; Taylor Phinney (USA), 25; Manuel Quinziato (Italy), 35; Joey Rosskopf (USA), 25; Samuel Sánchez (Spain), 37; Michael Schär (Switzerland), 28; Manuel Senni (Italy), 23; Peter Stetina (USA), 27; Dylan Teuns (Belgium), 23; Greg Van Avermaet (Belgium), 30; Tejay van Garderen (USA), 26; Peter Velits (Slovakia), 30; Danilo Wyss (Switzerland), 29; Rick Zabel (Germany), 21.

PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER Jim Ochowicz
SPORT DIRECTORS Fabio Baldato, Yvon Ledonois, Valerio Piva, Max Sciandri, Jackson Stewart
FRAME BMC
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Shimano
CLOTHING Pearl Izumi



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CANNONDALE-GARMIN

(USA)



TOM DANIELSON

FOR THE CANNONDALE-GARMIN TEAM, the USA Pro Challenge is about as close to home-field advantage as it gets. Many of the riders either live or regularly train in Colorado, and manager Jonathan Vaughters grew up and still lives in Denver. The team has placed a rider on the final podium for every edition of the USAPC and won the overall with Christian Vande Velde in 2012. Geography, history, and a loaded roster give the team every reason to aspire to similar heights this year.

Tom Danielson, a longtime resident of Colorado, has made the general classification at this race an annual goal since the first edition in 2011. He has finished fourth, seventh, third, and second overall, respectively. He also won stage 3 in 2012. As his career winds down, he is hoping to finally stand on the top step of the podium.

Alex Howes is a native Coloradan who will look to repeat his stage victory from last year in front of home crowds. Born in Golden, the Boulder resident has also proven that he is an invaluable teammate when it comes to protecting his team leader in the race for the overall.

ROSTER Janier Acevedo (Colombia), 29; Jack Bauer (NZ), 30; Alberto Bettiol (Italy), 21; Nathan Brown (USA), 23; André Cardoso (Portugal), 30; Tom Danielson (USA), 37; Joe Dombrowski (USA), 24; Davide Formolo (Italy), 22; Alex Howes (USA), 27; Nathan Haas (Australia), 26; Ryder Hesjedal (Canada), 34; Benjamin King (USA), 26; Edward King (USA), 32; Kristijan Koren (Slovakia), 28; Sebastian Langeveld (Netherlands), 30; Alan Marangoni (Italy), 30; Daniel Martin (Ireland), 28; Matej Mohoric (Slovakia), 20; Moreno Moser (Italy), 24; Ramunas Navardauskas (Lithuania), 27; Lasse Norman Hansen (Denmark), 23; Kristoffer Skjerping (Norway), 23; Tom-Jelte Slagter (Netherlands), 25; Andrew Talansky (USA), 26; Dylan van Baarle (Netherlands), 23; Davide Villella (Italy), 24; Ruben Zepuntke (Germany), 22.

GENERAL MANAGER Jonathan Vaughters

SPORT DIRECTOR Charly Wegelius

FRAME Cannondale

DRIVETRAIN Shimano

WHEELS Mavic

CLOTHING Castelli

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TINKOFF-SAXO

(RUSSIA)

WHETHER YOU JUDGE by polarizing owner Oleg Tinkov, who dyed his hair pink at this year's Giro d'Italia; a star-studded roster that includes superstars **Alberto Contador** and **Peter Sagan**; or even the neon-yellow kits, Tinkoff-Saxo is one of the flashiest teams in cycling.

Leading the charge at the Pro Challenge will be Czech rider **Roman Kreuziger**, a superb all-rounder who burst onto the scene in 2008, when he won the mountainous Tour of Switzerland at age 22. Tinkoff-Saxo is so loaded with support riders that Kreuziger often finds himself riding in the service of someone else—as he did in the 2013 Tour de France, where he finished fifth despite riding in support of Contador. Riding as a leader, and with full team support, he'll be a big favorite in Colorado.

Tinkoff-Saxo also boasts fan favorite Sagan, a thrilling rider who can win sprints, hang in the mountains, and shine anywhere in between. The all-time record holder for stage wins at the Tour of California, the Slovakian star shocked everyone this year by winning the overall. The Pro Challenge course is too mountainous for Sagan to hope to repeat his California performance, but he could be in the hunt for stage wins.

ROSTER Ivan Basso (Italy), 37; Edward Beltran (Colombia), 25; Daniele Bennati (Italy), 34; Manuele Boaro (Italy), 28; Maciej Bodnar (Poland), 30; Matti Breschel (Denmark), 30; Pavel Brutt (Russia), 33; Alberto Contador (Spain), 32; Jasper Hansen (Denmark), 24; Jesús Hernández (Spain), 33; Chrstopher Juul-Jensen (Denmark), 26; Robert Kiserlovski (Croatia), 28; Michael Kolar (Slovakia), 22; Roman Kreuziger (Czech Republic), 29; Rafal Majka (Poland), 25; Jay McCarthy (Australia), 22; Michael Morkov (Denmark), 30; Sérgio Paulinho (Portugal), 35; Evgeni Petrov (Russia), 37; Bruno Pires (Portugal), 34; Pawel Poljanski (Poland), 25; Michael Rogers (Australia), 35; Ivan Rovny (Russia), 27; Juraj Sagan (Slovakia), 26; Peter Sagan (Slovakia), 25; Chris Anker Sorensen (Denmark), 30; Matteo Tosatto (Italy), 41; Nikolay Trusov (Russia), 30; Michael Valgren Andersen (Denmark), 23; Oliver Zaugg (Switzerland), 34.

GENERAL MANAGER Stefano Feltrin

SPORT DIRECTORS Bruno Cenghialta, Tristan Hoffman, Steven de Jongh, Lars Michaelson, Nicki Sorensen, Giuseppe Toni, Patxi Vila, Sean Yates

FRAME Specialized

DRIVETRAIN Shimano and FSA

WHEELS Roval

CLOTHING Sportful

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TREK FACTORY RACING

(USA)



FRÄNK SCHLECK

AS A US-REGISTERED TEAM with an American sponsor, Trek Factory Racing will want to showcase its talents on home soil. And who better to task with that challenge than the current national road champion, **Matthew Busche**, who finished fifth overall last year. A strong climber, the two-time national champ was left off the Tour de France roster and will want to rebound from that disappointment and stake his claim as a worthy champion.

Fränk Schleck has long been a fan of the Pro Challenge. "This race is special to me," he said after the 2014 edition. "It demonstrates a great passion for cycling in the States, and that's what cycling needs. I'm very happy to be here." In the twilight of his career, and having not raced the Tour de France, Schleck will arrive in Colorado motivated and fresh—and with the potential to make an impact on the overall classification.

Other gifted climbers that could have an impact on the race are **Julian Arredondo** and **Haimar Zubeldia**. The Spaniard was sixth overall at the Tour of California in May.

ROSTER Eugenio Alafaci (Italy), 24; Julian Arredondo (Colombia), 26; Fumi-yuki Beppu (Japan), 32; Matthew Busche (USA), 30; Fabian Cancellara (Switzerland), 34; Marco Coledan (Italy), 26; Stijn Devolder (Belgium), 35; Laurent Didier (Luxembourg), 30; Fabio Felline (Italy), 25; Markel Irizar (Spain), 35; Bob Jungels (Luxembourg), 22; Daniel McConnell (Australia), 29; Bauke Mollema (Netherlands), 28; Yaroslav Popovych (Ukraine), 35; Gregory Rast (Switzerland), 35; Hayden Roulston (NZ), 34; Fränk Schleck (Luxembourg), 35; Jesse Sergent (NZ), 26; Fábio Silvestre (Portugal), 25; Gert Steegmans (Belgium), 34; Jasper Stuyven (Belgium), 23; Giacomo Nizzolo (Italy), 26; Boy van Poppel (Netherlands), 27; Danny van Poppel (Netherlands), 21; Kristof Vandewalle (Belgium), 30; Calvin Watson (Australia), 22; Riccardo Zoidl (Austria), 27; Haimar Zubeldia (Spain), 38.

GENERAL MANAGER Luca Guercilena
SPORT DIRECTOR Kim Andersen
FRAME Trek
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Shimano
CLOTHING Bontrager

ADVENTURES

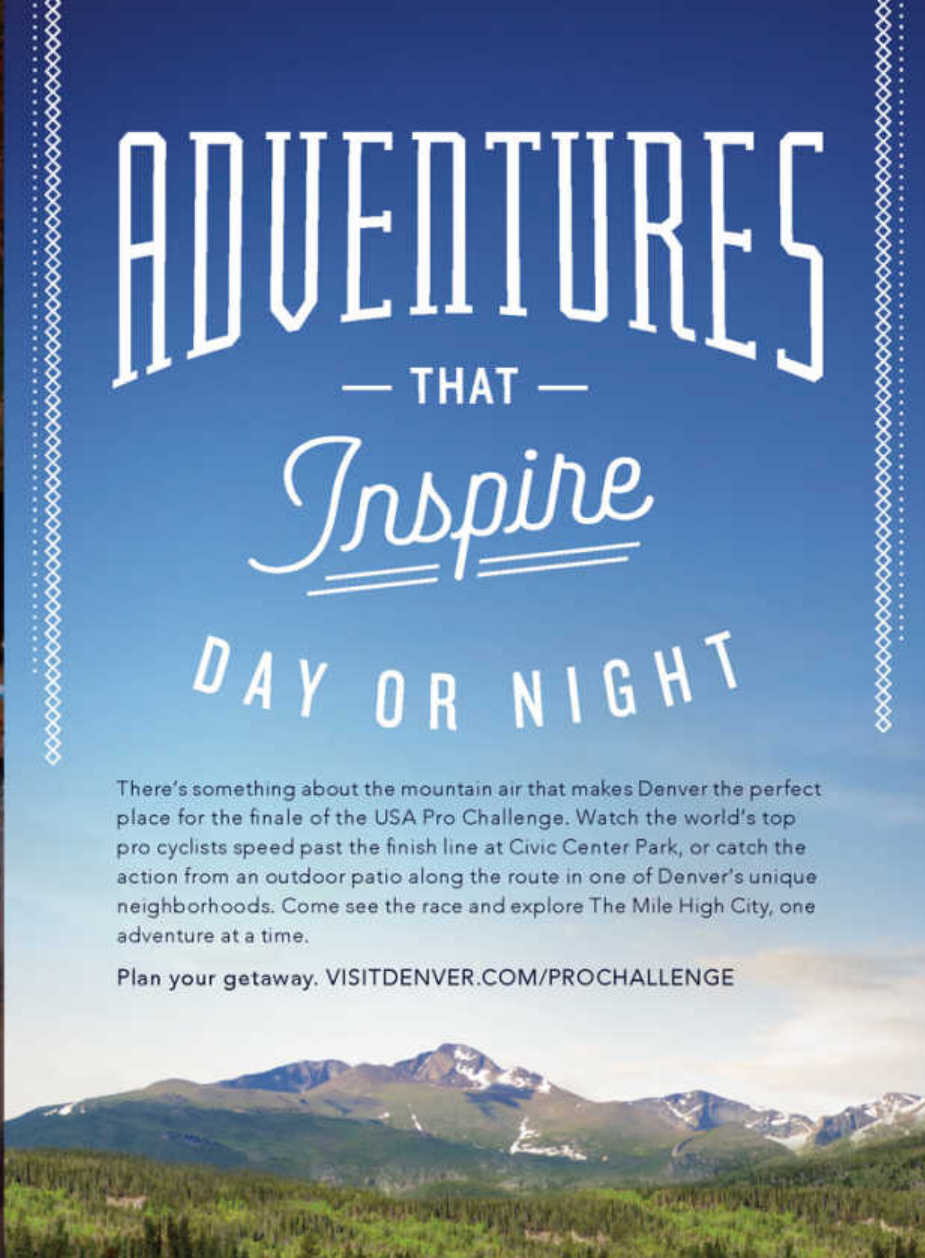
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CAJA RURAL-SEGUROS RGA (SPAIN)

CAJA RURAL IS MAKING its American stage-racing debut at the USA Pro Challenge after having a successful early season in North America. The Spanish team won three stages and the general classification at the Tour de Beauce in Canada with **Pello Bilbao**, and upset a talented North American field to win the Philly Cycling Classic with **Carlos Barbero**.

Barbero has a fast-finishing sprint, and the tougher the finish the better for the young Spaniard. The stage 4 finish in Breckenridge should suit him well.

Amets Txurruka and Bilbao give the team solid options for the mountain stages. They may not be able to stay with the top climbers, but a breakaway effort may lead to TV time and more.

Lluis Mas is a wildcard for Caja Rural. The Spaniard out-foxed the sprinters on the final stage of the Tour of Turkey to claim the win over Mark Cavendish.

ROSTER Javier Aramendia (Spain), 29; David Arroyo (Spain), 35; Carlos Barbero (Spain), 24; Miguel Angel Benito (Spain), 22; Pello Bilbao (Spain), 25; Hugh Carthy (UK), 21; Omar Fraile (Spain), 25; Jose Goncalves (Portugal), 26; Francesco Lasca (Italy), 27; Angel Madrazo (Spain), 25; Lluís Guillermo Mas Bonet (Spain), 26; Antonio Molina (Spain), 24; Sergio Pardilla (Spain), 31; Eduard Prades (Spain), 28; Amets Txurruka (Spain), 33; Ricardo Vilela (Portugal), 28.

GENERAL MANAGER Jose Manuel Hernandez

SPORT DIRECTOR Eugenio Goikoetxea, Jose Miguel Fernandez, Genaro Prego Dominguez

FRAME Fuji

COMPONENTS Shimano

WHEELS Oval

CLOTHES Alé

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DRAPAC PROFESSIONAL CYCLING

(AUSTRALIA)



BRENTON JONES

THE DRAPAC PRO CONTINENTAL TEAM will travel all the way from Australia in hopes of animating the action in Colorado. With the varied skillsets of **Lachlan Norris** and **Wouter Wippert**, the team could be competitive in every stage of the race.

A stage winner at the WorldTour's Tour Down Under earlier this year, Wippert has proven he can sprint with the best. Norris, a proven climber who scored a top-15 finish on Mount Baldy at the Tour of California in May, will look to strike when the road goes up.

WorldTour veteran **Martin Kohler** will navigate the squad throughout each stage, while former Belkin sprinter **Graeme Brown** will lead out Wippert in the sprints.

ROSTER Graeme Brown (Australia), 36; Will Clarke (Australia), 30; Dylan Girdlestone (South Africa), 25; Robbie Hucker (Australia), 25; Brenton Jones (Australia), 23; Jordan Kerby (Australia), 22; Martin Kohler (Switzerland), 29; Peter Koning (Netherlands) 24; Darren Laphorne (Australia), 32; Travis Meyer (Australia), 26; Lachlan Norris (Australia), 28; Cameron Peterson (Australia), 31; Adam Phelan (Australia), 23; Timothy Roe (Australia), 25; Malcolm Rudolph (Australia), 26; Samuel Spokes (Australia), 23; Bernard Sulzberger (Australia), 31; Wouter Wippert (Netherlands), 24.

GENERAL MANAGER Jonathan Breckveldt

SPORT DIRECTORS Tom Southam,

Agostino Giramondo

FRAME Swift

DRIVETRAIN SRAM

WHEELS Zipp

CLOTHING Champion System

PERFORMANCE ART

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USA Pro Challenge Events Schedule:

- 8/15** Go Ride Steamboat - Citizens' Ride
- 8/15** Team Presentations & Jeff Austin Band (FREE Concert)
- 8/16** Pro Challenge Festival
- 8/17** Overall Start of the Pro Challenge & Festival
- 8/18** Pro Challenge Stage 2 Steamboat to Arapahoe Basin

For a full schedule of events and to book lodging, visit: www.SteamboatProCycling.com



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TEAM NOVO NORDISK (USA)

NICOLAS LEFRANCOIS



THE WORLD'S FIRST ALL-DIABETES pro cycling team, Team Novo Nordisk enters the Pro Challenge in the middle of its best season to date. The team earned a wildcard invitation to this year's edition of Milan-Sanremo, while **Scott Ambrose** scored the Novo Nordisk's first ever UCI stage win, taking stage 2 of the Tour de Filipinas.

Expect this team to try and put a rider in the breakaway each day. Last year, **Javier Megias**, riding alongside Jens Voigt, nearly pulled off an upset stage win last year in the final stage, only to be caught in the final lap of the downtown Denver circuit.

For the climbs, the team will look to **David Lozano**, winner of the king of the mountains classification at the 2014 Cholet Pays De Loire in France. **Charles Planet** is another rider capable of racing aggressively throughout the week.

ROSTER Scott Ambrose (Australia), 20; Corentin Cherhal (France), 21; Stephen Clancy (Ireland), 22; Ruud Cremers (Netherlands), 23; Kevin De Mesmaeker (Belgium), 24; Gerd De Keijzer (Netherlands), 21; Benjamin Dilley (USA), 23; James Glasspool (Australia), 24; Joonas Henttala (Finland), 23; Nicolas Lefrancois (France), 28; David Lozano Riba (Spain), 26; Javier Megias Leal (Spain), 31; Andrea Peron (Italy), 26; Charles Planet (France), 21; Thomas Raeymaekers (Belgium), 22; Simon Strobel (Germany) 28; Martijn Verschoor (Netherlands), 30; Christopher Williams (Australia), 33.

GENERAL MANAGER Vassili Davidenko

SPORT DIRECTORS Massimo Podenzana, Pavel Cherkasov, Paolo Artuso

FRAME Orbea

DRIVETRAIN Shimano

WHEELS Shimano

CLOTHING Craft

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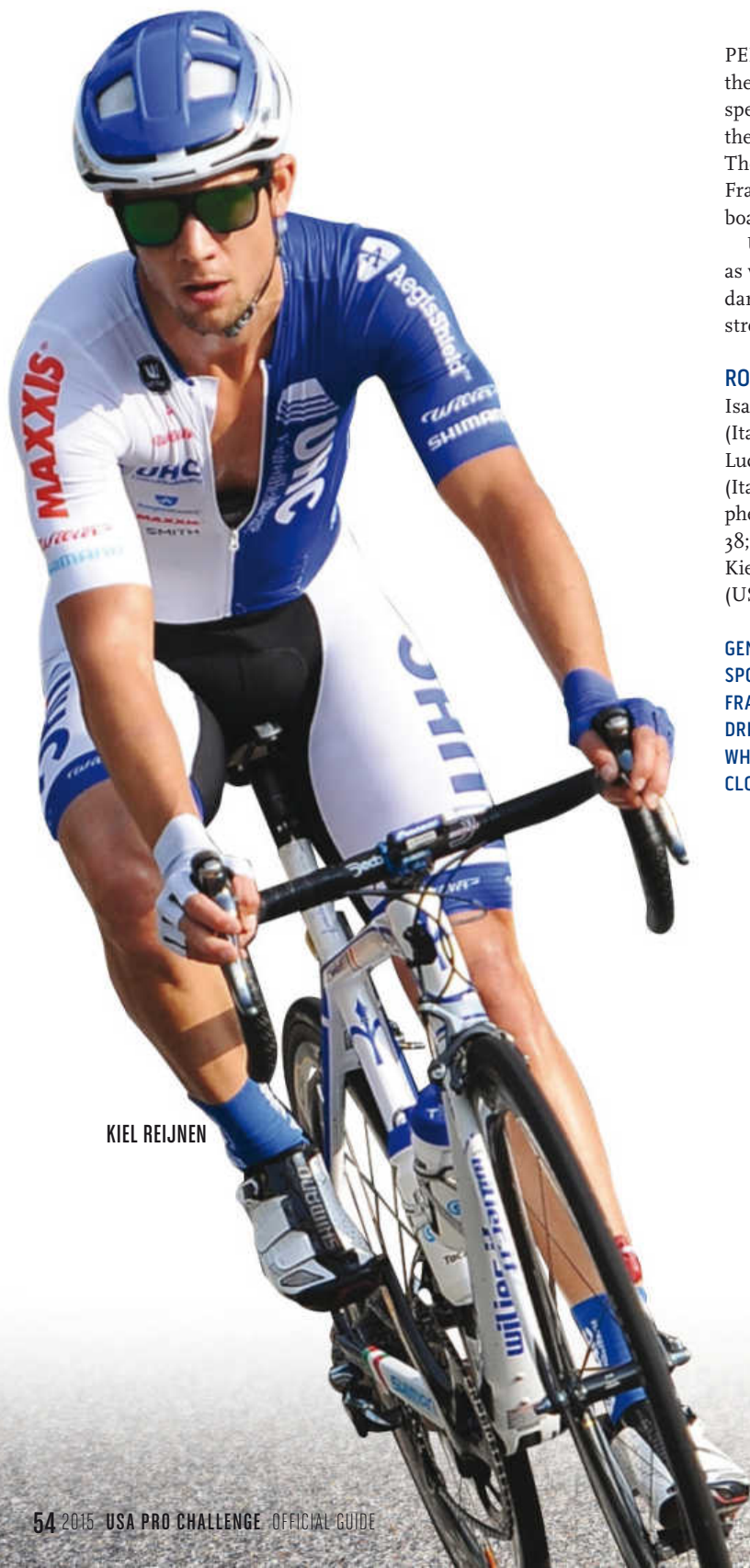


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UNITEDHEALTHCARE PRO CYCLING TEAM (USA)



KIEL REIJNEN

PERENNIAL DOMESTIC POWERHOUSE UnitedHealthcare comes into the Pro Challenge with a multifaceted squad. **Kiel Reijnen's** fast finishing speed and ability to make it over medium-sized climbs helped him win the opening stage of last year's race and don the leader's jersey for a day. The team has added firepower for the climbs with former top-10 Tour de France finisher **Jani Brajkovic**. Along with **Lucas Euser**, the squad now boasts a solid one-two punch when the roads begin to climb.

UnitedHealthcare has a well-drilled lead-out train for the sprint days as well, having won numerous races on the National Criterium Calendar. Colorado native **Danny Summerhill**, an opportunist who will look to stretch his legs in the breakaways, is another name to watch.

ROSTER Carlos Alzate (Colombia), 32; Alessandro Bazzana (Italy), 30; Isaac Bolivar (Colombia), 24; Jani Brajkovic (Slovenia), 31; Marco Canola (Italy), 26; Hilton Clarke (Australia), 35; Jonathan Clarke (Australia), 30; Lucas Euser (USA), 31; Robert Förster (Germany), 37; Davide Frattini (Italy), 36; Ken Hanson (USA), 33; Adrian Hegyvari (USA), 31; Christopher Jones (USA), 36; Luke Keough (USA), 24; Karl Menzies (Australia), 38; John Murphy (USA), Tanner Putt (USA), 23; Daniele Ratto (Italy), 25; Kiel Reijnen (USA), 29; Danny Summerhill (USA), 26; Bradley White (USA), 33; Federico Zurlo (Italy) 21.

GENERAL MANAGER Mike Tamayo

SPORT DIRECTORS Hendrik Redant, Roberto Damiani

FRAME Wilier

DRIVETRAIN Shimano

WHEELS Shimano

CLOTHING Vermarc



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AXEON CYCLING TEAM (USA)



GREG DANIEL

RETIRED PRO AXEL MERCKX (yes, son of Eddy) is well into his second career as a developer of young cycling talent. The former director of the Trek-Livestrong development team, which gave us current stars like Taylor Phinney and Jesse Sergent, is now the owner and director of Axeon Cycling Team.

The first-year team dominated the action at the U.S. under-23 national road race championship and took first and second with **Keegan Swirbul** and **Greg Daniel**, respectively.

Portugal's **Ruben Guerreiro** placed second in his country's under-23 national championship road race and third in the time trial.

In Colorado, British rider **Tao Geoghegan Hart** will be looking forward to the mountains for a chance to prove that his 13th-place overall finish at the Amgen Tour of California and eighth at the mountainous Tour of the Gila were no flukes.

ROSTER William Barta (USA), 19; Geoffrey Curran (USA), 19; Gregory Daniel (USA), 20; Daniel Eaton (USA), 22; Ruben Guerreiro (Portugal), 21; Tao Geoghegan Hart (UK), 20; Oram James (NZ), 22; Philip O'Donnell (USA), 19; Justin Oien (USA), 20; Logan Owen (USA), 20; Christopher Putt (USA), 21; Keegan Swirbul (USA), 19.

GENERAL MANAGER Axel Merckx
SPORT DIRECTOR Axel Merckx
FRAME Cipollini
DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS Zipp
CLOTHING Alé

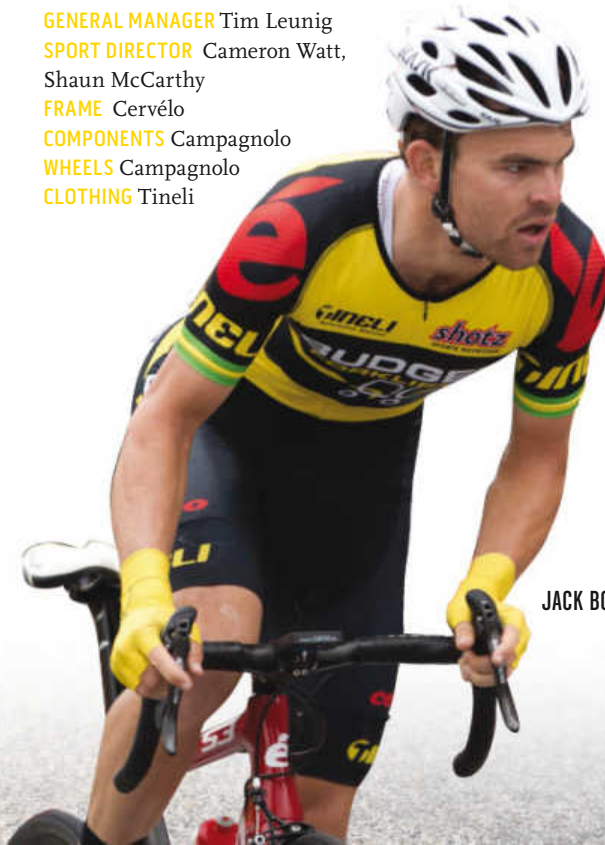
BUDGET FORKLIFTS CYCLING TEAM (AUSTRALIA)

TEAM BUDGET FORKLIFTS is making its North American debut this year, and comes to Colorado looking to make a name for itself. Strongman **Jack Bobridge**, the current world record holder in the 4km individual pursuit, will be a threat to upset the sprinters in Steamboat Springs. He won the opening stage of the Santos Tour Down Under at the beginning of the year out of a breakaway. He'll also be eyeing the time trial in Breckenridge. Bobridge attempted but failed to establish a new hour record on the track in January.

Brendan Canty, winner of the stage 3 time trial at the Tour de Beauce, will also aim for a high placing in Breckenridge. **Scott Sunderland** gives the team an option for the bunch sprints, having claimed third place at the Australian national criterium championships earlier this year. **Glenn O'Shea** will help guide the team on the road, along with Bobridge; both have spent time at the WorldTour level.

ROSTER Jack Anderson (Australia), 27; Daniel Barry (NZ), 25; Josh Berry (Australia), 24; Jack Bobridge (Australia), 25; Brendan Canty (Australia), 22; Luke Davison (Australia), 24; Westley Gough (NZ), 26; Sam Horgan (NZ), 27; Kristian Juel (Denmark), 22; Jake Kauffmann (Australia), 27; Mitchell Mulhern (Australia), 23; Tommy Nankervis (Australia), 31; Glenn O'Shea (Australia), 25; Myron Simpson (NZ), 24; Scott Sunderland (Australia), 26; Brodie Talbot (Australia), 25; Michael Vink (NZ), 23; Sam Witmitz (Australia), 29.

GENERAL MANAGER Tim Leunig
SPORT DIRECTOR Cameron Watt, Shaun McCarthy
FRAME Cervélo
COMPONENTS Campagnolo
WHEELS Campagnolo
CLOTHING Tinelli



JACK BOBRIDGE

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CYCLING ACADEMY POWERED BY PETER SAGAN (ISR)



DANIEL TUREK

THIS NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION helps develop young riders from Israel and Eastern Europe. Based in Slovakia, the first-year team has two Slovakian riders and—most notably—boasts as its ambassador that country's most famous cyclist, Peter Sagan.

Five of the team's 12 riders hail from Israel, including under-23 national road champion **Roy Goldstein** and elite time trial champion **Yoav Bear**. There are also two Slovakian, four Polish, and one Czech rider on the roster.

Watch for Czech standout **Daniel Turek** in the sprints. He took stage 4 at the Tour of Azerbaijan and stage 1 at the Tour of Berlin.

ROSTER Antonio Angulo (Spain), 22; Yoav Bear (Israel), 24; Mario Daško (Slovakia), 21; Ben Einhorn (Israel), 22; Gabay Guy (Israel), 22; Roy Goldstein (Israel), 22; Lubos Malovec (Slovakia), 21; Wojciech Migdal (Poland), 24; Emanuel Piaskowy (Poland), 24; Guy Sagiv (Israel), 20; Patryk Talaga (Poland), 20; Daniel Turek (Czech Republic), 22; Bartosz Warchol (Poland), 23; Ido Zilberstein (Israel), 21.

GENERAL MANAGER Ran Margalio

SPORT DIRECTORS Jan Valach, Dror Pekatch

FRAME Specialized

DRIVETRAIN Shimano

WHEELS Vision

CLOTHING Sportful

HINCAPIE RACING TEAM (USA)

THE KIDS OF HINCAPIE RACING TEAM return to Colorado after a breakthrough performance in 2014 when **Robin Carpenter** captured stage 2 into Crested Butte. This opportunist team with an aggressive racing style will look to have a rider in the breakaway each day.

The team placed three riders in the top-five at the Winston Cycling Classic, proving their aggressive style pays off. Latvian **Toms Skujins**, the winner in Winston and also on stage 3 of the Tour of California, has a knack for winning out of a breakaway.

Fast-men **Ty Wagner** and **Joe Lewis** provide the team with options should the race come down to a sprint.

Dion Smith can do it all—ride for the overall, sprint, or go for a stage—and will be the team's wildcard. He won the overall at the Cascade Cycling Classic in late July.

ROSTER Mackenzie Brennan (USA), 25; Miguel Bryon (USA), 20; Robin Carpenter (USA), 23; Oscar Clark (USA), 26; Andzs Flakis (Latvia), 24; Jonathan Hornbeck (USA), 25; Charlie Hough (USA), 20; Joe Lewis (USA), 26; Ty Wagner (USA), 24; Joe Schmalz (USA), 25; Toms Skujins (Latvia), 24; Dion Smith (NZ), 22; Rob Squire (USA), 25.

GENERAL MANAGER Rich Hincapie

SPORT DIRECTORS Thomas Craven

FRAME Felt

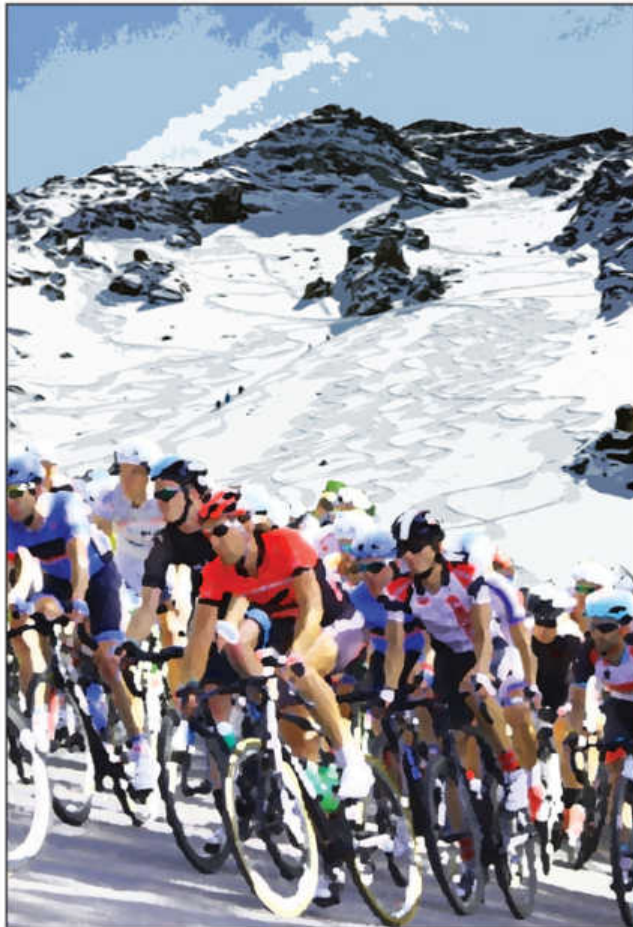
COMPONENTS Shimano

WHEELS HED

CLOTHING Hincapie Sportswear



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JAMIS-HAGENS BERMAN (USA)

SEBASTIAN HAEDO

THIS 10-YEAR-OLD TEAM has shown itself in the Pro Challenge before. Costa Rican rider **Gregory Brenes** finished sixth in 2013 and will be looking to improve upon that this year. Joining him, especially when the route heads into the mountains, will be Colombian climber **Daniel Jaramillo**, grabbed eighth place overall at the Tour de San Luis in January and second place at the Tour of the Gila this spring.

With four years of experience racing at the WorldTour level, **Sebastian Haedo** will lead the efforts in the sprints. He has already taken stage victories at the Tour of the Gila and the Joe Martin Stage Race in 2015.

ROSTER Luis Romero Amaran (Cuba), 36; Gregory Brenes Obando (Costa Rica), 27; Ian Crane (USA), 25; Lucas Sebastian Haedo (Argentina), 32; Benjamin Jacques-Maynes (USA), 36; Daniel Alexander Jaramillo Diez (Colombia), 24; Stephen Leece (USA), 23; Carson Miller (USA), 26; Eric Schildge (USA), 27; Walter Gaston Trillini (Argentina), 24; David Williams (USA), 27; Nathan Wilson (USA), 24.

GENERAL MANAGER Carine Joannou
SPORT DIRECTOR Sebastian Alexandre
FRAME Jamis
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Shimano
CLOTHING Hincapie Sportswear

JELLY BELLY-MAXXIS (USA)

IN ITS 16TH YEAR OF RACING, Jelly Belly-Maxxis has shown that experience can be the key to victory. One of the longest-running operations in the domestic peloton, the team will rely on four-time U.S. champion **Fred-die Rodriguez** for the sprint finishes in Colorado. A three-year veteran of the team, "Fast Freddie" brings one of the most experienced palmares to the geographically challenging route, having raced for many years at the WorldTour level.

Young Australian **Lachlan Morton**, formerly of Garmin-Sharp, will be one of the climbing specialists hoping to ride all the way onto the final podium. He finished fifth overall in 2013 on his way to the best young rider classification. He'll be helped by his brother **Gus Morton**, who returned to the sport this season and is hungry for success.

The younger Morton will have the help of **Gavin Mannion** in the mountains. A former stagiaire for Garmin-Sharp, Mannion has been climbing well all season, having claimed second overall at the Redlands Classic before finishing third at the mountainous Tour of the Gila.

ROSTER Joshua Berry (USA), 24; Alexandr Braico (Moldova), 27; Steve Fisher (USA), 25; Jonathan Freter (USA), 23; Gavin Mannion (USA), 23; Sean Mazich (USA), 29; Angus Morton (Australia), 26; Lachlan Morton (Australia), 23; Jacob Rathe (USA), 24; Fred Rodriguez (USA), 41; Taylor Shelden (USA), 28; Andrew Sjogren (USA), 23; Eric Slack (USA), 27; Nicolae Tanovitchii (Moldova), 21.



GENERAL MANAGER Danny Van Haute
SPORT DIRECTOR John Sessa
FRAME Argon 18
DRIVETRAIN Microshift and FSA
WHEELS Vision
CLOTHING Squadra

LACHLAN MORTON



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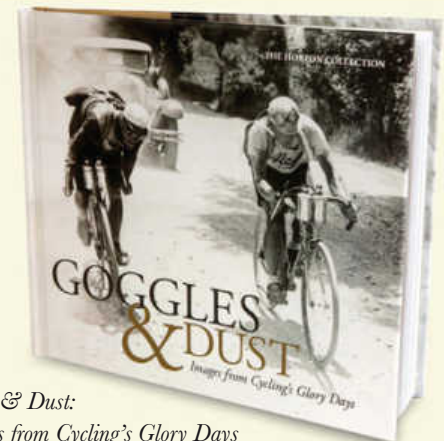
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OPTUM-KELLY BENEFIT STRATEGIES (USA)



TOM ZIRBEL

OPTUM COMES TO THE USA PRO CHALLENGE with general classification ambitions. **Phil Gaimon** spent a year in the WorldTour with Garmin-Sharp and has the climbing skills to contend with the best. He won the general classification at the Redlands Classic, including the stage 3 summit finish.

Will Routley is another rider who can shoot for a high placing in the mountains, having taken the KOM classification at the Tour of California in 2014.

The team has a formidable duo in the sprints with **Brad Huff** and **Eric Young**. Young won a stage of the Tour of Utah last year and recently won the White Spot Road Race at the Tour de Delta.

Tom Zirbel provides the team with an excellent time trial option, but the course in Breckenridge may be too difficult for him.

ROSTER Ryan Anderson (Canada), 28; Jesse Anthony (USA), 30; Guillaume Boivin (Canada), 26; Christopher Clements (USA), 25; Cameron Dodge (USA), 23; Phil Gaimon (USA), 29; Charles Bradley Huff (USA), 36; Pierriek Naud (Canada), 24; Will Routley (Canada), 32; Bjorn Selander (USA), 27; Thomas Soladay (USA), 32; Kerry Werner (USA), 24; Curtis White (USA), 19; Michael Woods (USA), 29; Eric Young (USA), 26; Tom Zirbel (USA), 36; Scott Zwizanski (USA), 38.

GENERAL MANAGER Jacob Erker
SPORT DIRECTOR Jonas Carney
FRAME Diamondback

COMPONENTS SRAM
WHEELS HED
CLOTHING Borah

TEAM SMARTSTOP (USA)

TEAM SMARTSTOP WILL BE LED by Canadian **Rob Britton**, the winner of this year's Tour of the Gila. Though he finished 26th overall at last year's Pro Challenge, the Canadian has had a breakthrough year in 2015, having finished in the top 10 of both the Tour of California and Tour of Taiwan.

Slovenian **Jure Kocjan** has also been enjoying a strong season, nabbing nine top-10 finishes across the first half of the year. He's the type of sprinter who can get over the punchy climbs late in the race. So, too, can **Travis McCabe**. Not to be forgotten is **Eric Marcotte**, the 2014 national road champion.

Boulder resident **Julian Kyer** is looking for redemption after breaking his collarbone at the Tour of the Gila. He proved his climbing chops last year by finishing 11th overall at the Pro Challenge.

ROSTER Zach Bell (Canada), 32; Rob Britton (Canada), 30; Chris Butler (USA), 27; Kris Dahl (Canada), 23; Flavio De Luna (Mexico), 24; Evan Huffman (USA), 25; Shane Kline (USA), 26; Jure Kocjan (Slovenia), 30; Julian Kyer (USA), 27; Travis Livermon (USA), 27; Eric Marcotte (USA), 35; Travis McCabe (USA), 26; Robert Sweeting (USA), 28; Juan Pablo Villegas (Colombia), 27.

GENERAL MANAGER Omer Kem
SPORT DIRECTOR Michael Creed
FRAME NeilPryde
DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS FFWD
CLOTHING Champion System



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TWENTY16-SHO-AIR (USA)

FOR 2015, the Twenty16-Sho-Air team signed two-time Olympic gold medalist **Kristin Armstrong**, who confirmed she's as strong as ever with a victory at the national time trial championship in May. Since the team began, Twenty16 has combined a focus on development with the pursuit of top-level results. This year, the team picked up additional sponsorship from Sho-Air and the Barry Bonds Family Foundation and registered as a UCI team.

Watch for Armstrong to rip the opening day time trial and make a solid play for overall victory. **Andrea Dvorak**, overall winner of the Cascade Cycling Classic in July, offers strong support on the climbs, while **Lauren Hall's** fast finish could make her a good pick for a stage victory. In keeping with the team's development mission, Twenty16-Sho-Air's Colorado squad will include junior **Chloe Dygert**, who recently secured a spot on the U.S. team for worlds in September.

ROSTER Kaitie Antonneau (USA), 23; Allison Arensman (USA), 21; Kristin Armstrong (USA), 41; Jess Cerra (USA), 33; Allie Dragoo (USA), 25; Andrea Dvorak (USA), 34; Lauren Hall (USA), 36; Alison Jackson (Canada), 26; Lauren Komanski (USA), 30.

GENERAL MANAGER Nicola Cranmer
SPORT DIRECTOR Mari Holden
FRAME Felt

DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS Zipp
CLOTHING JL Velo

OPTUM-KELLY BENEFIT STRATEGIES (USA)

OPTUM-KELLY BENEFITS STRATEGIES is a perennial contender in North American races. Climber **Lex Albrecht**, who won the queen of the mountains prize at the Redlands Classic earlier this year, will be Optum's go-to rider in the mountainous road race, while the team will look to all-arounder **Alison Tetrick** to shine in the time trial. Tetrick, who won a bronze medal in the team time trial at last year's world championships, is pursuing a Ph.D. in neuropsychology. **Brianne Walle**, who combines racing with a full-time job at Yakima, is handy in the breakaways and a dedicated support rider.

ROSTER Lex Albrecht (Canada), 28; Amy Charity (USA), 38; Annie Ewart (Canada), 21; Jasmin Glaesser (Canada), 23; Ariane Horbach (Germany), 21; Maura Kinsella (USA), 24; Leah Kirchmann (Canada), 25; Alison Tetrick (USA), 30; Brianne Walle (USA), 31.

GENERAL MANAGER Kevin Field
SPORT DIRECTOR Pat McCarty
FRAME Diamondback
DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS HED
CLOTHING Borah



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CORYN RIVERA

UNITEDHEALTHCARE (USA)

FOR YEARS, UnitedHealthcare has been one of the top teams in the U.S. You can expect to see its blue and white jerseys at the front of almost any race. The team currently holds the top spot in the NRC rankings and combines a U.S. racing schedule with selected international events, including La Course by Le Tour de France.

The roster is stacked with strong riders, but **Coryn Rivera** stands out as one of the biggest talents, not just on this team but in all of women's cycling. At 23, Rivera has already amassed 53 national championship titles. This year she heads to Richmond to race with the elite women at the world championships.

Rivera's super power is sprint finishes, so she'll be looking for a big result in Golden. Current New Zealand national champion **Linda Villumsen** is a good bet for the time trial in Breckenridge, while Rivera or speedster **Hannah Barnes** could score if the road race comes back together on the long descent into Fort Collins.

ROSTER Hannah Barnes (UK), 22; Laura Brown (Canada), 28; Rushlee Buchanan (NZ), 27; Katie Hall (USA), 28; Cari Higgins (USA), 39; Scotti Lechuga (USA), 32; Abby Mickey (USA), 25; Coryn Rivera (USA), 22; Alexis Ryan (USA), 21; Lauren Tamayo (USA), 32; Linda Villumsen (NZ), 29; Ruth Winder (USA), 22.

GENERAL MANAGER Mike Tamayo
SPORT DIRECTOR Rachel Heal
FRAME Wilier

DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Shimano
CLOTHING Vermarc

BMW-THE HAPPY TOOTH (USA)

FORMER NATIONAL CHAMPION **Robin Farina** headlines BMW-The Happy Tooth, a team created just this year. The squad is directed by the experienced Jono Coulter, formerly of Vanderkitten, who brought a core group of riders with him from that team. BMW-The Happy Tooth also recently added women's cycling advocate and multiple-time St. Kitts and Nevis national champion **Kathryn Bertine** to the roster.

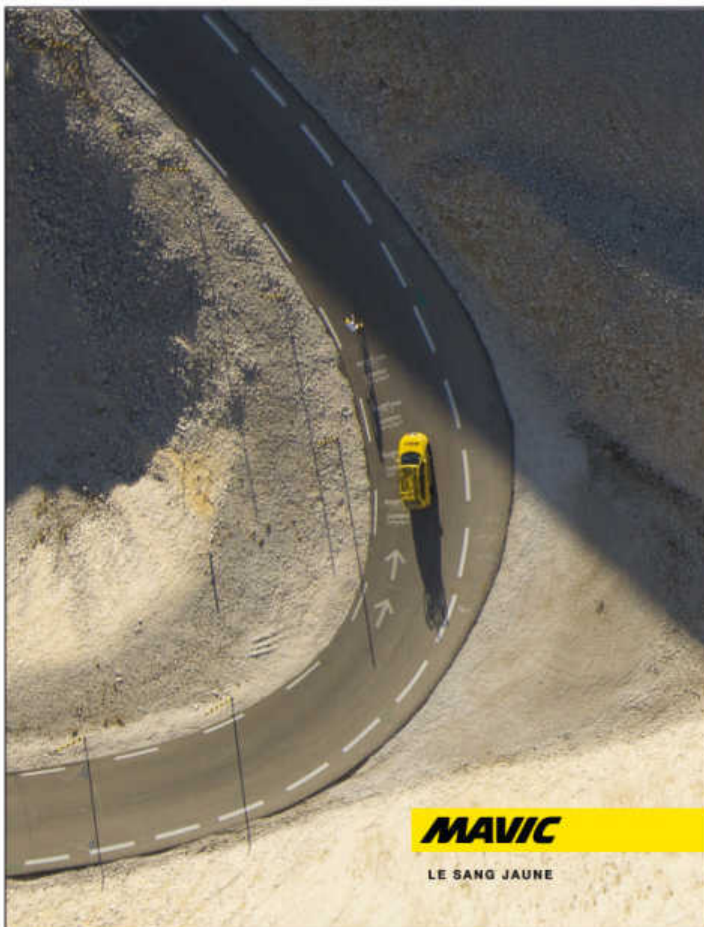
In Farina, BMW-Happy Tooth has an experienced road captain who can win from a small group if a breakaway stays away on the road to Fort Collins. Australian **Miranda Griffiths** is a talented climber who could shine on the climb of Buckhorn Canyon. Former Ironman triathlete **Rhae Shaw** will target the Breckenridge time trial, while 2014 under-23 national criterium champion **Michelle Khare** will mix it up in the Golden circuit race.

ROSTER Elle Anderson (USA), 26; Kathryn Bertine (Saint Kitts and Nevis), 40; Robin Farina (USA), 37; Miranda Griffiths (Australia), 32; Korina Hui-zar (USA), 27; Michelle Khare (USA), 23; Liza Racchetto (USA), 41; Megan Rathwell (Canada), 29; Shoshauna Routley (Canada), 28; Rhae Shaw (Canada), 39; Jessy Uebelhart (Switzerland), 24; Erica Zaveta (USA), 26.

GENERAL MANAGER Omer Kem
SPORT DIRECTOR Jono Coulter
FRAME Blue
DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS FFWD Wheels
CLOTHING Champion System



ROBIN FARINA



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PEPPER PALACE-THE HAPPY TOOTH (USA)



SARAH FADER

OVER THE PAST FEW SEASONS, Pepper Palace-The Happy Tooth has built a reputation as a tightknit team, and along the way they've scooped up a number of top results on the criterium circuit. Thanks to additional sponsorship support from Scott and The Happy Tooth this year, the team has expanded with six new riders and registered as a UCI team for the first time. The 2015 roster includes five national champions—and two Ph.D.'s.

Pepper Palace comes to the Pro Challenge with flexible tactics and an emphasis on teamwork. Watch for the team to shine in the circuit race in Golden, where sprinter **Sarah Fader** will be in her element. Former New Zealand national champ **Courtney Lowe** and the experienced **Amber Pierce** could surprise in the road race, and they'll be ably captained by former national champion **Meredith Miller**, one of the best support riders in the women's field.

ROSTER Lindsay Bayer (USA), 30; Suzanna Dupee (USA), 28; Sarah Fader (USA), 36; Christina Gokey-Smith (USA), 42; Laura Jorgensen (USA), 29; Julie Kuliecza (USA), 35; Courtney Lowe (NZ), 24; Amanda Miller (USA), 28; Meredith Miller (USA), 42; Amy Phillips (USA), 42; Tina Pic (USA), 49; Amber Pierce (USA), 34.

GENERAL MANAGER Jay Hirst
SPORT DIRECTOR Nicky Wangsgard
FRAME Scott

DRIVETRAIN SRAM
WHEELS Reynolds
CLOTHING Sugoi

TEAM TIBCO-SVB (USA)

WITH 11 SEASONS OF RACING behind them, Team Tibco-SVB is one of the longest-running women's teams in North America. A stellar 2014 season brought 47 race victories and both NRC overall titles—team and individual. The team will be captained by **Joanne Kisanowski**, a three-time Olympian and multiple-time national champion from New Zealand, and former Colorado resident.

Two-time Swiss time trial champion **Patricia Schwager** will look for success in Breckenridge. If a big group makes it to the finish of the stage 2 road race, Kisanowski and young talent **Kendall Ryan** both have a solid turn of speed that could put them in the mix. They'll also be looking for a good finish in the circuit race in Golden.

ROSTER Alizee Brien (Canada), 21; Emily Collins (NZ), 24; Kristabel Doebl-Hickok (USA), 26; Kathrin Hammes (Germany), 26; Sara Headley (USA), 30; Joanne Hogan (Australia), 32; Joanne Kisanowski (NZ), 36; Kendall Ryan (USA), 22; Patricia Schwager (Switzerland) 31; Lauren Stephens (USA), 28; Anika Todd (Canada), 25.

GENERAL MANAGER Linda Jackson
SPORT DIRECTOR Jeff Pierce
FRAME Fuji
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Reynolds
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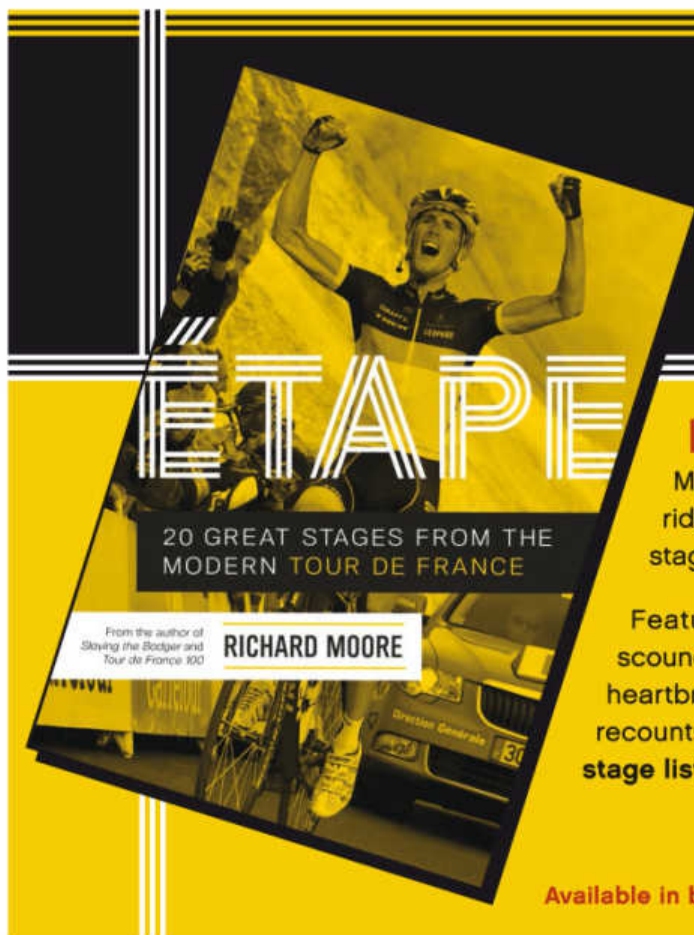
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VISIT DALLAS-NOISE4GOOD (USA)



AMBER NEBEN

THOUGH NOT A UCI-REGISTERED TEAM, Visit Dallas-Noise4Good boasts three former national champions, and the squad's star rider is former world time trial champion **Amber Neben**. Formerly known as FCS Cycling, the team brought Visit Dallas and Noise4Good on as title sponsors this year. In addition to her talented core group of riders, manager Rachel Byus signed former Irish national champion **Olivia Dillon** and current Brazilian national champion **Flavia Oliveira** for 2015.

After two years plagued by injuries, Neben has returned to form this season, finishing third at the U.S. national time trial championship. A talented stage racer, Neben is a solid contender for the overall and will look to start things off with a strong time trial in Breckenridge. Oliveira finished in the top 10 at the Tour of California women's race, and her climbing strength will serve her well during the mountainous stage 2 road race.

ROSTER Amber Neben (USA), 40; Rachel Byus (USA), 29; Anna Grace Christiansen (USA), 30; Olivia Dillon (Ireland), 42; Anna Sanders (USA), 34; Mia Manganello (USA), 26; Kathryn Hunter (USA), 31; BethAnn Orton (USA), 34.

GENERAL MANAGER Rachel Byus
SPORT DIRECTOR Scott Warren
FRAME Orbea

DRIVETRAIN Shimano and FSA
WHEELS Vision
CLOTHING JL Velo

COLAVITA-BIANCHI (USA)

COLAVITA-BIANCHI IS AT ITS BEST in criterium races. In 2014, the team won the National Criterium Calendar individual title with Erica Allar, who has since transferred. For 2015, the team added climbing strength by signing **Kathryn Donovan**, who will look for an opportunity on the 20-mile climb up Buckhorn Canyon during stage 2.

The team also picked up more speed with **Morgan Brown**, who finished fourth at criterium nationals this year; she'll have her eyes set on the circuit race in Golden. **Emma Grant** has a fast finish and a talent for criterium racing, while **Stephanie Wetzel** and **Jessica Cutler** are all-around talents equally at home in the time trial and climbing stages.

Whitney Schultz, who lives in Fort Collins, will be motivated to ride well in her home town on stage 2. She is a complete bike racer who also excels in the time trial.

ROSTER Morgan Brown (USA), 27; Jessica Cutler (USA), 36; Katie Donovan (USA), 33; Whitney Schultz (USA), 27; Mary Zider (USA), 31.

GENERAL MANAGER Mary Zider
SPORT DIRECTOR Mary Zider
FRAME Bianchi
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Shimano
CLOTHING Castelli



MARY ZIDER

CASEY E. GIBSON, SCOTT KINGSLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

A female cyclist, Breanne Nalder, is shown in a dynamic pose on a road bike. She is wearing a black and white helmet, orange-tinted sunglasses, and a rainbow-striped cycling jersey. Her bike has "DNA CYCLING" branding on the frame.

BREANNE NALDER

DNA CYCLING-K4 (USA)

UTAH-BASED DNA CYCLING-K4 heads to Colorado with hopes of stage results. Led by 2013 UCI masters world champion **Anne Perry**, the well-balanced squad has collected a string of successes in national and regional races. In **Gabrielle Pilote-Fortin**, the team has a two-time under-23 Canadian national champion and strong all-around performer. Climber **Breanne Nalder** thrives at altitude, having finished on the podium at the Gila Monster stage of this year's Tour of the Gila.

For the circuit race in Golden, the team will look to criterium specialists **Joanie Caron** and **Tiffany Pezzulo**. The latter's finishing speed has propelled her to third overall in the USA Crits Series. DNA Cycling-K4 will also have the benefit of some inside knowledge from Boulder local **Lauren De Crescenzo**, who is developing into a solid all-around talent.

ROSTER Joanie Caron (Canada), 31; Lauren De Crescenzo (USA), 25; Catherine Fegan-Kim (USA), 44; Heather Fischer (USA), 27; Kemi King (USA), 38; Breanne Nalder (USA), 31; Anne Perry (USA), 42; Gabrielle Pilote-Fortin (Canada), 22; Tiffany Pezzulo (USA), 40.

GENERAL MANAGER Alex Kim
SPORT DIRECTOR Dave Harward
FRAME Scott
DRIVETRAIN Shimano
WHEELS Reynolds
CLOTHING DNA Cycling

COLORADO WOMEN'S CYCLING PROJECT-SPARK (USA)

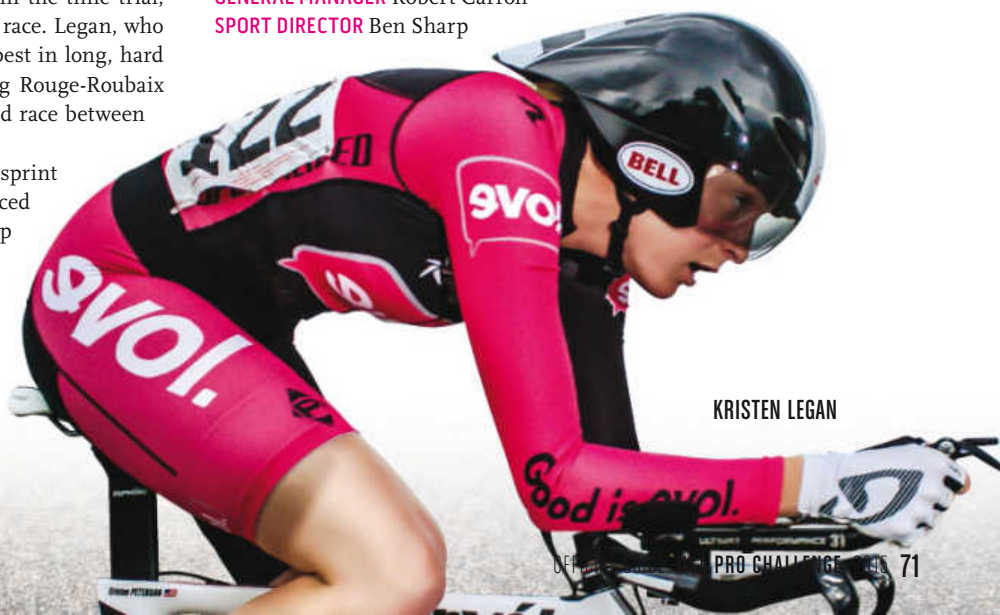
THE COLORADO WOMEN'S CYCLING PROJECT-SPARK composite team brings together six women from four Colorado teams to race the Women's Pro Challenge. The goal is to showcase women's cycling in Colorado and help build participation for women at all levels of the sport.

Gwen Inglis and **Kristen Legan** will look for results in the time trial, and the team will take an opportunist's approach to the race. Legan, who rode the entire Tour de France route in 2012, is at her best in long, hard efforts. She recently finished second at the leg-breaking Rouge-Roubaix and is looking forward to tackling the mountainous road race between Loveland and Fort Collins.

Jennifer Sharp and **Kim Johnson** will bring their sprint speed to the circuit race in Golden. Johnson recently raced BC Superweek and should have her criterium legs fired up and ready to go. Inglis is no slouch in the speed department either and could show well in Golden.

ROSTER Sabrina David (USA), 26; Meg Hendricks (USA), 39; Gwen Inglis (USA), 41; Kimberly Johnson (USA), 26; Kristen Legan (USA), 30; Jennifer Sharp (USA), 37.

GENERAL MANAGER Robert Carroll
SPORT DIRECTOR Ben Sharp





MARA ABBOTT

AMY D. FOUNDATION (USA)

COLORADO LOCAL AND TWO-TIME Giro Rosa winner **Mara Abbott** headlines the Amy D. Foundation team for the Women's Pro Challenge. The foundation is dedicated to supporting women's racing in memory of cyclo-cross racer Amy Dombroski, who was killed while training in Belgium two years ago. For the Women's Pro Challenge, the team has assembled a talented squad, and the experienced Lisa Hunt will serve as their guest director.

Though best known for her climbing, Abbott is an all-around talent who can rip a fast time trial when it counts. The Breckenridge course should suit her, and the Buckhorn Canyon climb during stage 2 is Abbott's favorite terrain. The descent to the finish will take the punch out of Abbott's climbing assault, but if the race goes hard on the climb, expect to see Abbott in a select group at the finish in Fort Collins. **Julie Emmerman** could also shine in the Breckenridge time trial, while **Christa Ghent** and **Gretchen Stumhofer** are both strong criterium racers.

ROSTER Kristen Arnold (USA), 25; Mara Abbott (USA), 30; Cheryl Clark (USA), 28; Julie Emmerman (USA), 46; Christa Ghent (USA), 25; Gretchen Stumhofer (USA), 26; Annie Toth (USA), 35.

GENERAL MANAGER Michael Engleman

SPORT DIRECTOR Lisa Hunt

FEARLESS FEMMES PRESENTED BY HAUTE WHEELS RACING (USA)

FEARLESS FEMMES PRESENTED BY HAUTE WHEELS RACING was born in 2015 from the merger of two strong women's programs. The team is part of Pure Energy Velo, a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for broader youth and community involvement in cycling. The Fearless Femmes' team members visit schools around the country to promote healthy nutrition and cycling safety. On the bike, they are a consistently successful criterium team.

The Irish national road race champion in 2014, **Fiona Meade** is the big name on the Fearless Femmes roster. After several successes in the early season in Ireland, Meade came to race in the U.S. for the summer. Watch for her on the stage 2 road race, and as a potential overall contender. Both **Mandy Heintz** and **Christy Keely** are talented criterium racers who will hope for good results in the circuit race in Golden. **Jannalyn Luttrell** recently finished second in the Utah state time trial championship. With her familiarity with altitude, Luttrell could surprise in Breckenridge.

ROSTER Janelle Cole (USA), 19; Amy Cutler (USA), 29; Jannalyn Luttrell (USA), 34; Mandy Heintz, (USA), 34; Christy Keely (USA), 30; Fiona Meade (Ireland), 34; Catherine Moore (USA), 45; Irena Ossola (USA), 27; Starla Teddergreen (USA), 36.

GENERAL MANAGER

Arounkone Sananikone

SPORT DIRECTOR Ernie Lechuga

FRAME Guru

DRIVETRAIN Shimano

WHEELS RDL

CLOTHING Vie13



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